













MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA · MADRAS  
MELBOURNE

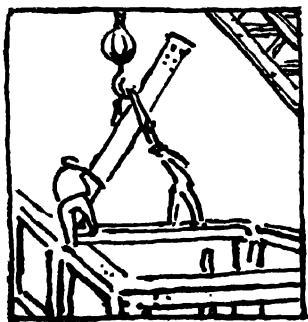
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO  
DALLAS · ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
OF CANADA, LIMITED  
TORONTO

AN  
ENGLISH TECHNIQUE

BY

ROY MELDRUM



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON  
1923

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
BY R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, EDINBURGH

‘ The mind is less strained, the more it reacts on what it deals with, and has a native play of its own, and is creative. . . . The character and quality of mental exertion required for composition is more healthy than the character and quality of exertion required for receiving and storing a number of knowledges.’

MATTHEW ARNOLD, 1882

‘ The learner’s native language ought to be the ground-work of all teaching. By this is meant the actual language, a skilful examination of the common sentence as a vehicle of intelligent thought.’

EDWARD THRING, 1883



## PREFACE

THROUGHOUT this book I refer to those who learn, teach or are taught, exclusively as men and boys. I do this not because I wish to differentiate between the sexes, but because the English language has no pronominal adjective of common gender in the singular. And having taught many more boys than girls, I adopt the masculine gender from the limits of my experience.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
AIM . . . . .	I
SUBJECT MATTER . . . . .	42
METHOD . . . . .	102
Arrangement of Lessons . . . . .	102
Reading . . . . .	110
Oral Composition . . . . .	133
Written Composition . . . . .	148
A Substitute for the Classics . . . . .	178
GRAMMAR . . . . .	235
APPENDIX A : A SUGGESTION FOR CERTAIN ESSENTIALS OF A TRAINING COLLEGE COURSE . . . . .	283
APPENDIX B . . . . .	288





## AIM

IF one can assume that no pupil is entirely uninfluenced by a teacher, however indifferent—then all who teach in any English school, even puritans of the Direct Method, have an effect either good or bad on the use of English made by the pupils of their school. This must occur to everyone at least as a possibility ; and yet, so far as I know, prospective teachers nowhere receive practical help in the use of their own language, irrespective of their various specialisms. In their period of training, for example, they teach in schools ; this is certainly lingual practice, but practice in which too many issues are involved for a student to concentrate on the art of communication as a special study in itself. Apart from this school practice they hear lectures on the theory of education. If they listen to these and if their ears are in the least critical, they may select such material from the lectures as seems suitable and handy for reproducing in whatever examination the lectures anticipate. This process of selection is, certainly, an indirect but rather lame approach to studying relations between words and ideas, in order to communicate them in some way. Besides listening to lectures, they may also write essays on educational topics. Many, perhaps most of these essays, I am inclined to believe, if they had no name on them, could only be assigned to their authors by virtue of their

handwriting. They are usually without distinctive structure, and without distinctive verbal power : they are little more than diligent but undigested accumulations of matter taken from the most conveniently accessible authorities. This may be due to the fact that being specialists in one subject students find it a little hard to adapt themselves to another in a given time, or it may be that they are simply following a tradition of higher studies impressed on them by a university course. In any case, it is not a profitable training in language, and the control of ideas ; and however much by these present methods they may become reputable specialists in education and receive a breadth of outlook on their profession, which practice in it alone cannot give, yet they would probably be more effective if they could speak a little more with the tongues of angels and write not always in another's hand ; that is, if their professional training gave them such help in the use of their own language as to free them from indifference to general ideas and their apt expression, an indifference which a three years' course of specialised study very often seems to produce.

However,—whether or no a teacher has received a satisfactory training in the use of his own language,—he still shares, whatever his subject, a common responsibility for the standard of English in his school. He who teaches mathematics may feel that he is less responsible than he who teaches English ; and it is true that they have not the same function : the mathematician's concern with English being—roughly speaking—concern with a means rather than an end. And the same may be said of other specialists. But this

difference in function does not remove responsibility. Unfortunately in practice it may lead to mutual dissatisfactions ; the one specialist complaining that his work suffers from the supposed incompetence of the other ; and between the two a semi-literate boy may be the result ; also a semi-literate man, prone to every epidemic of false values. There seems to be no final cure for this trouble but the recognition that English is a school subject of a different genus from any other ; and that therefore every teacher in a school should be an English specialist : in other words, it should not be the privilege of any one type of specialist to teach it. Some teachers might spend more of their time on it than others ; but even the appreciation lesson, circling round poetry, the lesson of all others, which contains the danger of fostering an esoteric cult within a staff, should be the prerogative of the biologist as much as the classic, and the one should be as capable of making a success of it as the other.

I do not select the biologist as being less literate or less accessible to poetic contact than the teacher of any other subject. On the contrary, I am aware that as many teachers of natural science, chemistry, physics or biology are as sensitive to the value of language as those to whom it is supposed to be the peculiar care. They are equally likely to understand how much they can effect by their own apt and able use of the spoken word, by their clarity in writing, by cogent and varied questioning, by simple and attractive narrative, by their skill in sustaining the arrest and interest of a statement or in forming a discussion with a care for exact or attractive expression. And their interest in language

may extend equally with that of the English specialist beyond a sense of its value merely as an effective instrument in teaching. Their special attitude to their subject matter may confine this interest to narrower limits : there is, for example, a difference of treatment, though the matter is similar, in ' Sow'd Cockle reaped no corn ' and ' Corn Cockle—(*Agrostemma Githago*, order Carophyllaceae) . . . its black testa discolours flour, etc.' But for all that, I have sometimes observed in lessons based on simple chemical experiments more help given towards the understanding of poetry than in many lessons based on poems themselves. The definite conditions of the experiment preclude ambitious vagueness : prevent irrelevant and self-indulgent soliloquies. I have heard an English specialist chatter about Tennyson's ' Brook ' as though he had never had leisure enough in his life to sit by a few feet of running water : the result was a verbal oleograph. And I have heard a chemistry specialist, in focussing the observation of a class on a crucible of copper pyrites, slowly heated over a flame, make them choose words so carefully to describe the changes of appearance that, if any boy had latent in him poetic capacity, he was being equipped for its expression. In a manner well within his grasp and stimulated by a purpose he understood, he was learning to be sense-alert, to discern the difference in value of words seemingly similar, to increase his vocabulary for the sake of exactitude, to venture on metaphor as a living experience, and to see those imaginative resemblances which make reality. I do not suggest that verbal precision leaning over a Bunsen burner is of itself a poetic quality ; but I would

suggest that as the poet has a higher power of verbal precision than most men, this one of his qualities, at least, may be found near the Science bench. Unfortunately it may not be found there as often as one could wish. A teacher of chemistry, for example, is not above using 'all' when he means 'some'; and even the exact mathematician, by the inconsistencies of his tongue, will give a boy a false impression of equality.

Doubtless, neither of these two delinquents would excuse himself on the grounds that he was affected by the low standard of English among his boys; but he might take refuge in the no better excuse that he was paid to teach chemistry or mathematics, and not English. And owing to the congestion of the syllabus in most schools there is a kind of false reasonableness in this plea. If a history teacher is to cover the period prescribed for the term or year, he cannot spend time dotting boys' i's and crossing their t's, even if he does this to his own; he cannot be responsible for their grammar as well as their dates. Incidentally, he often goes out of his way to force their grammar out of joint, because he insists on too great a quantity of written work, at a time when the boy still has a very clumsy grasp of his pen; and he insists on this because he does not take the trouble to think out more economic ways of probing the boy's knowledge.

All the same, it is true that under the present organisation of school subjects the teacher of special subjects other than English must rely to a certain extent on the standard of speech and writing provided by the English specialist. The one employs what the other produces. This must not be forgotten in con-

sidering what aims the English specialist should have, as pivots for his work.

I must confess here that I am tempted to shy at any discussion of such aims and consequent methods, and instead, choose some idle morning and try to describe it, as that yesterday I took a walk by the Cam, and near Baitsbite found a fallen tree and sat there for half an hour. At the back of me was the river, still bearing on its sluggish water the faint whiff of intellectual ferments ; beyond it, the towpath, empty of its rowing priesthood ; in front across a June meadow, lined with silvery willows, a clump of elms sheltering a huge old roof, one of those fen groups set in spacious levels, which give the mind a calmness of horizon dotted with many serious problems ; overhead, skiffs of white and blue, sparkling ; a snipe now drumming, now protesting that I should be there ; to the right from the bare top of a dying ash, a hawk shooting again and again into the air in the hope of planing to a kill ; and when I had drawn the description to its end, add to it, such is the mood I should like to feel in an English lesson, and leave it at that ; or to put it all more briefly in a quotation, I would suggest that the aims and methods of the English lesson should agree with Izaak Walton's dictum : ' When I sat last on this primrose bank and looked down these meadows, I thought of them as Charles the Emperor did of the city of Florence : " that they were too pleasant to be looked on, but only on holydays " '. And with this suggestion I would close the whole matter. But a meadowland of aims and methods might not mean much to many people. One is familiar

with the mind, which begs to be clothed in a perfect method, not of its own making ; which will wear any cast-off aim, provided that it has a fashionable cut ; the mind also, which must move in every particular according to a very definite scheme, for fear it might be lost in a wilderness of thought—a rather illusory fear. I should be sorry to present such minds, even if I could, with what they want. Thoughtless borrowing and automatism should not be encouraged in any school subject ; at all costs, what I might call the random element must be preserved : otherwise teaching is death, perhaps a refined death, perhaps with all accessories perfect, but still death. And the random element can only be preserved by the individual venturing thoughtfully on his own aims and methods ; and in discussing these matters now, I would as little desire to dictate a pattern as I would resent having a pattern dictated to me. On the other hand, those who resent dictating to themselves a pattern to be followed in their lessons, who prefer to leave aim and method in the unconscious background of their individuality, and trust entirely to spontaneous resourcefulness, I believe to be putting themselves at a disadvantage. They may be extremely skilful, very stimulating and inspiring, but they tend always to be less than they might have been. They may even suffer disintegration. To think out an aim or a method with definiteness, even though each has to be daily modified according to circumstance, is a preservative of individuality : in so far as a man maintains his individuality ‘ by trying to make sure that he feels what he thinks he feels, that he thinks what he thinks he thinks, that his words mean



what he thinks they mean'.—I congratulate Mr Murry on this activity of verbs.

What is, then, the aim I would propose to myself ? In part, it is already fixed by the demands of other specialists. It is necessary for every stage of their work that a pupil should already have a corresponding degree of skill in speech and writing. They do not expect to have to provide this command of English ; they may, if it is there, do something to assist it. A history teacher, for example, by clever choice of subject matter and an intelligent grasp of it himself, will exercise a boy's ability to make a *précis* and probably add something to his skill ; but he will not expect to set about showing a boy for the first time what a *précis* means. That will be taken for granted as the work of the English specialist. And so with other subjects in the curriculum.

The English course, then, must be in part the learning of a technique, a craft of words such that a boy can make a simple logical statement, relative to various kinds of systematised knowledge. For example, he must be able to express a clear mathematical deduction, from the simple to the more complex, as time goes on : he must be able to describe precisely a chemical action and the conditions under which it takes place : he must be able, given certain historical dates, to express a judgment, in which their main points are co-ordinated, again the complexity varying according to his standard of attainment. It might be thought that a technique as slender as this would be supplied without much effort ; but if anyone spent a little time listening to the verbal intercourse in any large class from

the senior years of an elementary to the certificate year of a secondary school, he would notice how little exercise any one boy has in following up a train of ideas in a clear verbal sequence : how much, hour by hour, he is forming a habit of being content with something ' not quite '.

To make a clear and simple satisfactory statement on a concrete topic, such as an event in one's personal experience, is not as easy a process as some rather too confident teachers seem to think. It is certainly easier to make a satisfactory statement on an abstract topic, on which there has already been a good deal of selection and formulation by others, and it is this kind of topic which is the subject matter of the various special branches of knowledge. But even if it were possible to equip a boy for the easier type of statement only, it would be distinctly unwise ; and to equip him for the more difficult type means encouraging or training him to perceive intelligently all the potentially relevant details of an object, to select and assess those details essential for his immediate purpose, and as part of that assessment, to co-ordinate them with a pattern of ideas, related to objects similar to the one perceived, to arrange his embryo conception in an order suitable for delivery, that is, to put his ideas in a form in which they can be communicated, and for this a definite point of view with regard to them is needed ; finally, to choose words which do not suggest merely a vague impression of what is in his mind but reveal it—if it is to be a clear and simple statement—with due emphasis, economically and without misunderstanding ; that is, with a sense of the effect his words are going to have

on others : the whole process, though on any given occasion much of it may be subconscious, yet needing a certain power of resistance to emotional distraction.

I regret that I have not been able to put in a simpler way what, I imagine, are some of the mental processes underlying a simple statement of fact. But I do not think that any simplification could do away with the actual intricacy of the problem facing the teacher of English here. In practice the intelligent teacher solves it with more ease than this analysis might suggest : he solves much of it by apt subconscious reactions. But he will not do that if he thinks that the learning of even a simple technique is a thing that grows and flourishes like a weed without any care. That, however, is a false condition : for he would not then be intelligent.

One item in our aim, then, is to equip a boy with a power of communication satisfactory for various special subjects. In so far as this means that the learning of English is to be a craft, it is sound. To learn a craft has a utility value, intelligible to the boy himself, and so causes interest ; and however much English may be a discipline it will be ineffective unless at all points it is fused with interest. But to learn a craft in itself is not enough. ' Those who live for technique are killed by technique.'<sup>1</sup> It is too narrow an intention : it should only be a part of a more important whole. If as a part it dominates the whole, there is a danger that the English course may produce mechanics, skilled perhaps but only within narrow limits, an army of small experts, for whom experience must be reduced to un-

<sup>1</sup> Constant Lambert, *Music Ho !*

real formulae, before they can exercise their expert skill on it, their skill being confined to the externals of a jargon or terminology : or again, they may learn a trick of structure perhaps excellent in itself, but, like gifted slaves, they are ready to use it in the service of any appetite which cares to employ them. Of this kind are advertisement writers, of the other politicians. I need not give examples of the latter's skill in terminology : one has only to listen to a home or foreign station on the air, when a commemoration banquet is being held or any other function, at which public service, mostly elderly, is expounding public policy or private virtues. But, to take the more skilful type of verbal expert, I select this example from a newspaper advertisement—I might have made the selection from a more exclusive literary source, but on the whole there seems to be more attention paid to form in the more popular kind of advertisement. So I quote : ' It makes your mouth water even to *think* of — flavour. Savoury, zestful, delicious. Every tender mouthful improved by pure olive oil—no scales—no hard bones to spoil your enjoyment. And because they're so tasty—so nourishing—so easily digested, — are just as *good* for you as they're delightful to eat ! '

Here there is obvious care for form. In a short space,—every word being well paid for,—the problem has been to make a strong appeal to a dual appetite, health and pleasure. This may be too crude a way of putting it ; for one is almost left with the impression that health is synonymous with virtue, and pleasure with beauty—though a little oily. To make this impression, there has been, of course, a sharp choice of

vocabulary ; but there has been also a close study of syntactical form, even of rhythm : all very conscious, perhaps, but none the less a study of form, and I would say, a successful study. The general ordering of the words gives each of them its due stress : the structure, though it has strength and mass, has also a certain resilience, and the illusion of being spontaneous. Just enough of syncopated syntax, of the ' broken line ', as it were, to be vivid and to show that it is in touch with the most serious of modern literary effort : just enough of the intimate personal vernacular touch, to prove that it is in the main stream of popular consciousness,—I use ' popular ' here as a term of serious approbation. And yet with this intimacy and irregularity there is a discrete use of traditional forms, an effective contrast of the romantic and classical. Among those forms most noticeable is the *acervus ex tribus*—' savoury, zestful, delicious ', and the threefold stress here, according to some, should put it into the category of verse, but myself I think it remains above any suspicion of such a too compelling persuasiveness. That would be an error in taste. It does its work better as the innocent explanation of prose. There are also two sets of this three-grouping, running parallel in the second and third sentences, expressing an effect by their parallelism, and yet varied enough in detail not to be too obvious and so weaken each other. ' So tasty—so nourishing—so easily digested '—here is also a miniature climax, attained, as all great effects, by simple means, here by the gradual increase of stress in a succession of ideas through the verbal form chosen for each, and incidentally the double theme of the ' good ' and the

'delightful' is woven into the small compass of the climax. And in that third sentence the 'good' and the 'delightful' are brought into a contrast of mutual benefit by a true-to-type 'complex' sentence,—only complex by definition,—a sentence worth including for its form in any collection of examples for 'analysis', cheek by jowl with specimens of eighteenth-century prose. Nor is this an isolated example of the care in technique shown by the advertiser's craft. 'Ask any smoker of — if what I say is more than they deserve'—supple in texture, obliquely potent. 'The Sunshine Vitamins, the fats which give you energy, the milk which goes to make —, reach you with their natural nourishment at its freshest, and therefore at its best'—not so clever a choice of words as in the first piece, nor so sure a sense of rhythm, but still structurally Burke;—these are examples found close to the first in casually turning over the pages of a daily paper.

One cannot deny technical proficiency to such writing; but it is a proficiency which, unless controlled by a power greater than itself, is likely to have an unhealthy effect on the language. Mere craftsmanship, as an aim, is not therefore enough. But if instead of producing a craftsman, the school aimed at producing an artist, would that be a sufficient and satisfactory basis for the work of the English specialist? Personally I think that it would. The fact that no institution can produce either artist or poet is irrelevant. It is enough that it should sincerely aim at producing one: the individual will complete the aim for himself or not, according to what is in him; and I think he is more likely to complete the aim if the English room in a

school is a literary studio rather than a literary salon.

The use of the word 'artist' here may seem confusing to some. All I mean is that if you make it your aim to help a boy to express himself to the best of his ability, instead of helping him only to express a set of ideas, of which he is temporarily aware, but which may not be an integral part of him, you are thereby trying to create an artist, as well as a craftsman, craft being included in art. The artist has technical skill, but uses it as a means of combining himself with an object in whatever medium he uses : and in consequence, the object has a distinctive and individual value. The craftsman can write a letter as well as the artist, so far as its external form is concerned ; but only the artist can write a letter, in which the form and the matter combine perfectly to give the letter an identity of its own, something original, something with a new value. This difference between art and craft is not negligible, nor are the consequences on the English course, if we take as its aim the growing of an artist.

The phrase 'to help a boy to express himself to the best of his ability' has some implications that might be ignored at first sight. I will go into these in a moment, and try, in disentangling them, to show why I would make this my own choice of an aim in teaching English. But first I would warn anyone from accepting it, just because it may sound a decent and obvious sort of thing to do—helping lame dogs over unnecessary stiles and so forth. A sentimental attitude as an aim is not likely to lead to much vigorous thinking-out of method. Besides, that a boy should receive

help in communicating his ideas and feelings to others as well as possible, is nothing more than his right as a future social being. It is not a matter of any teacher's charity. In the present anxiety to pack into a boy this, that or the other kind of special knowledge, much of which he will never use later even as a ballast, it is sometimes forgotten that most of his after-life will be spent in meeting situations in which the saying or not saying, writing or not writing of some commonplace word will be the thing most crucial to himself and others. Quadratic equations will not soothe a quarrelsome neighbour, nor the Pragmatic Sanction reduce a swollen official.

Between a human society and an animal herd there would be in many respects little to choose, if man had neither speech nor writing. In this form of language he lives and thinks, in so far as he is conscious of his activity. He is less than man, if he cannot communicate his ideas in words to others : and any system of education which does not give all the members of a state an equal opportunity to learn this basic power must be condemned. To leave a man inarticulate, when he might be articulate within a certain compass, is an anti-social act ; but in spite of that, I fear that it has been a deliberate practice on the part of those classes who have from time to time controlled education. In this matter of speech, it has been regarded as natural that those who have been compelled to work long hours from an early age at heavy physical tasks should not have ideas to express, or if they had them, should not have the training of throat and mouth necessary to express them, except to a very limited



audience. Actually, when labour compels a man to long periods of unspoken thought and the struggle for the necessities of life rather than its comforts makes him aware of elemental values in existence, he has ideas which it is important that he should express in widely communicable form. Denied that communication, these ideas obstruct one another, and thus hampered, are put to rout by inferior and second-hand ideas from outside. And the thought of a whole society is less vigorous.

As against this, I know it will be claimed that the countryman with his apparently slow mind and rich dialect should be preserved from an enfeebling education and standard speech ; that he is the salt of the land as he is ; that strong original character of thought and feeling can only survive if he can be kept confined to little local hollows of tradition. This claim seems to be based on the supposition that originality and democratic culture cannot exist in one and the same being : a rather pessimistic point of view. I have heard West Coast Highlanders, whose natural speech was Gaelic, discuss political theories in English which, except for its purity, was indistinguishable from that spoken in a university : in other words, though as strong in local tradition as any dweller in a Devon or Somerset valley, they had the advantage of being able to express themselves on matters outside their parish, as citizens of an equal footing with any in the English-speaking society of peoples. Though I can only write from limited experience, I have received a similar impression from the French peasant, who can turn from a *patois* to the language he has learnt in school. And

I am forced to suspect the view that the genius of a people depends on its 'natural gentlemen' being half dumb. It may satisfy those who wish to escape from intellectual garrulity into a country they do not know. But, wise as those who work in the silence of the land can be—and I have found them wiser on the soil than in their more tongue-loosened hours in the village bar—yet their wisdom has not prevented English speech being riddled with class values : and inevitably English thought also. It has not prevented those, who have secured by one means or another a certain standard of material power, from selecting a certain manner of speech and vocabulary as peculiar to themselves : so that if anyone without the same material status used it, he should seem to commit a trespass. For these others a dialect is sufficient—not that in tone it has not a greater emotional range and less suggestion of mendacity—and if a dialect speaker aspires to the society of the first class, he is at liberty to train himself in what is known as the King's English, just as he is at liberty to buy a dress suit—both things making a link with a difference between master and servant.

As long as the schools allow this lingual hierarchy to exist, they are educating a caste form of society, however much in theory that society may be defined as democratic. To neglect a child's speech is as much a despotic act as to take away a man's civic rights : or maim him in other ways. On the individual it may impose a taciturnity, or difficulty of speech, for which he suffers unnecessary inhibitions. Within society it sets up unnatural barriers of communication, and so both hinders the flow of intelligent intercourse and

the just appreciation of ideas at their intrinsic value—for where speech is judged by class standards, so also is what is said.

In what I have written above, I trust that I have not given the impression of belittling dialect as such ; I have only wished to assert that inasmuch as education is a social claim on the state, the school should give the opportunity to every individual alike of using one common medium of communication, a standard speech.

This in itself is no easy task ; it means making in many a new attitude towards the value of speech. It is not enough that the individual should regard it as a standard of correctness imposed from without, the property of a type of government, as is implied in the phrase 'the King's English'. If he is to have a care for it, he must feel it as a possession for which he himself is responsible. Apart from this change of attitude, the task of reforming muscular habits and remoulding facial inheritances will not be completed in a day. But, supposing that speech becomes a more flexible and artistic instrument, I do not suggest that because speech poor in delivery tends to be poor in content, the converse is true : that to speak well always tends to intelligent thought or even to thought at all. Many an excellent tongue has worn itself out in an empty head. Manner without content is somewhat of a ghost.

This brings me back to the aim already stated 'to help a boy to express himself to the best of his ability'. In 'himself'<sup>1</sup> or nowhere is to be found the content :

<sup>1</sup> For practical, apart from other reasons, I assume the potentiality of an individual self.

eventually what is expressed in speech or writing should come out of the individual self, as part of that self, and not merely as a conveyance of unintegrated ideas. In the preparatory stage, that is, school, the self is only in process of coming into being, and so, much that is expressed by the boy can only be the impersonal communication of what he has borrowed from others, without making it a part of himself. He cannot communicate a self which does not exist ; but in his own interests, the more that he can express at any stage, which reveals that he is ' forming ' a distinctive self, the better ; and so according to our proposed aim, side by side with helping the boy how to express a self, the teacher of English is concerned with the actual formation of that self also : that is, with the development of an individual. I need scarcely suggest that this concern should not tempt him into forcing a standard content on the boy. He may require a standard speech, but he cannot impress a standard pattern of ideas and be consistent to our present aim. For though he may have his own ideal of what an intelligent human being should be and what such a being ought to think and so express, he will not help to its realisation if he dictates it. Actually, the ideals of an intelligent adult are still themselves continually growing, as he learns more and more from his experience, and the fact that they are not yet complete should make him naturally averse from regarding them as entirely adequate for others or at least from imposing them on others. However, if he does impose them, he might just as well stick artificial roses on a thistle and say that he has grown a rosebud. He might even

be believed at a cursory glance : but deception is not an explicit aim of education. On the other hand, by proper treatment of the soil, at the right stages of growth, a weed may become a valuable plant. But it is the weed which does the growing and becoming. The teacher's ideas are only valuable as ingredients in the soil, and unless the individual boy does the growing, that is, creates himself in the English course, he might as well spend the time in some section of specialised knowledge.

If he is to be really the centre of his work in English, the boy must have as much opportunity as possible both of using the language, spoken or written, and of providing the content of what he expresses. The word 'express' in the aim, stresses the use of language ; but the word 'himself', though it might pass unnoticed, is intended to stress also the use of his own experiences, in what he expresses. His own experiences, however trivial, what he does from day to day in or out of school, his feelings, moods, judgments, desires, these are to be his material for expression ; his attitude to his own language is to be that it is his own to use on what he wants to say or write ; and that what he wants to say or write is as important to him as what Shakespeare wanted to say or write was important to Shakespeare : which is of greater value to others, to remain an open question, until he comes to a conclusion about it in course of time. And even though the language of his choice is that of the gutter, and the experiences he wishes to record in it are also of the gutter, these tastes must not be ignored. They are the actual basis of any other standard of

judgment,—and they will probably have vigour. If the boy is to change his taste, it will be through his finding contact himself between his own experience and the experience of others, and this in school will be mainly through the record of that experience in what are known as the classics of the language. For him they are not classics, until through contact of similar experience he discovers and understands that they are : they are merely the records of people who have also attempted to put ideas of a kind down on paper. Obviously this will have an effect on the choice of reading matter of the English course : to force a boy to read, for example, something for which on account of his age he has not the requisite mental development or with which he has no emotional contact, and condemn him for not understanding it, is hardly the way to make a poor growth in taste improve its yield. But more on that point presently.

In the meantime, to some it may seem that the aim I have proposed is leading to the indifference of any and every individual peculiarity or whim ; and little can come of it but precocious eccentricities or a welter of vague babble, and unpleasant fungoid growths of self. This might be so, if the aim stopped at the word ‘ himself ’ ; but it includes also the words ‘ to the best of his ability ’. What if it does ?—a critic might say—that is not enough check on individual licence and for two reasons : it only affects the manner and not the content of expression ; it seems also rather an artificial addition to the aim and not likely to be of any practical effect. In answer to these objections I would claim in the first place that if anyone tries to improve the

form in which he expresses something, the odds are that he will have a certain discipline also in what he expresses ; and further, if anyone is receiving help from another in technique, that help, though directed to the form of speech or writing, is bound to affect the matter also. For example, in examining and comparing the arrangement of idea-groups either in a simple description or a complicated definition, as attempted by various writers, including those in the class-room, the formal element cannot be studied without a study of the material ; and as the teacher will probably select the examples taken from books, he will thus have a definite control even if indirectly exercised over the content of a boy's mind.

In the second place—expression in a class-room will be synonymous with communication. Although it is important for his individuality that a boy should be encouraged to express his thoughts before an imaginary or ideal audience or reader, such compositions will only be communicated to the class, if he sees in the class the imaginary reader of his choice : they are his own private property. But in the ordinary routine work of the class composition will be definitely communication of ideas to the class ; and this in itself is a check on mere profusion of rubbish—personally I should always fear poverty of expressiveness more than exuberance. But, anyway, to write something that is to be public to a known set of readers, is writing under discipline ; and it is obvious that the change, for example, from boyhood to adolescence will have a distinct effect on the type of matter which a boy is ready to communicate to others. It may be to a certain

extent a limitation in the range of content ; but, if that is a defect, it is more than balanced by the fact that what is expressed must be expressed in such a way that it conveys its meaning clearly to a definite known group of readers or listeners. With an imaginary public, one may take for granted that words convey the same feeling, intention and sense to it as to oneself : and to the finished artist this is his proper freedom ; but to the apprentice it is fatal. And here the class is a natural correction : it is also thereby a natural inducement to expression according to the best of one's ability.

Now the words ' according to the best of his ability ', though they qualify the verb ' express ' and therefore refer directly to the technique of communication, refer also indirectly to the object of the verb ' express '—the ideas contained in the self. Before he can achieve a best, the boy must have some idea of what is better or worse both in his ideas and the manner of their communication ; and for this he must make comparisons with others in order to find some criteria of value : and this discovery of values in experience, as it so much concerns the growth of the individual, is obviously the most important activity in the English course, and, I would say, gives it a unique character among school subjects. From this activity the teacher cannot stand aloof as a neutral observer. If he exercises any control at all in the class room, the standards of taste which he adopts will affect those with whom he works. He will therefore have to have a literary faith as it were : he cannot remain a non-committal critic, negative, analysing even cleverly the content of expression



into various elements like a chemical compound, and then regarding the analysis as equivalent to a constructive discrimination of values ; he cannot be content to regard a boy's mind as an aggregate of reactions or of checks and balances, or any other pseudo-scientific psychological quantum, mechanically deriving values from experience, which will result in an internal harmony, easily recognisable, and all by a kind of spontaneous generation.

Whether he likes it or not, in this matter of discriminating between values, intellectually or emotionally experienced, that is, in what is known as the appreciation lesson, he will either directly or indirectly have to suggest criteria and comparative values. Otherwise the boy whose taste is trivial will age into even greater triviality ; and when I referred to the vigour which might be found in the gutter, I referred to it only as a root of experience from which future experience would have to grow, if it was to have life : and one of the teacher's most difficult problems is to transplant this strongly rooted weed without killing it into a soil from which it will eventually draw the substance of excellent fruit. However ingeniously the transplantation is contrived, so that the weed is unaware of what is happening, the soil into which it is put is alive with selected values. Otherwise it would be sterile. However much the teacher of English may disguise it, he is responsible for bringing the minds he works with into contact with criteria of his own choice.

Personally I think this contact can be best made through practising the art of communication—the boy is most likely in that way to arrive at a true taste of his

own, and not a counterfeit : most likely to get a real insight into what is valuable in literature, instead of giving lip-service to values which he only intermittently understands. It seems to me the most natural way of approaching this matter of aesthetic and other appreciation. A child wishes to express his ideas : he seeks ideas from his parents : his interest in what they tell him is utilitarian and therefore strong. He wants help in an awkward corner, in a practical difficulty : a wise parent probably gives that help by a series of questions through which the child appears to have solved his own difficulty. The certainty of a coming solution keeps him interested : the interested effort he has to make in answering the questions may leave, as its residue, a tithe of interest in the manner of the solution itself. It is the beginning of an interested feeling that there may be a better or worse way of dealing with words. When he is a boy among other boys in a class, the process will be similar, except that his attention will more and more turn to questions of form in communication, as in class work the form or how something is expressed has a more general application than the matter or what is peculiar to each individual ; and when the boy reaches adolescence and becomes a conscious critic of himself and others, his interest in how to express a thing should be still stronger than the child's : for having become a conscious critic of himself and others, he should realise the need for gaining a mastery over the means by which he can assert his own judgment ; and this interest should extend naturally to finding out how others have expressed similar things successfully ; and from that it is an inevitable step to a

voluntary study of what others have expressed in order to gauge its value. In his search, at first subconscious and later more conscious, for values at first simple and later more complex, he comes to other writers, that is, authors, to get help from them in how to communicate an idea of his own ; he stays with them to appreciate the content of their ideas. Literature is, at first, something in which to find models for expression ; help in the practical problem of equipping oneself with a technique. In studying the work of men who have had to face the same difficulties as himself, the boy may have enough fellow-feeling with them on this score to take what they have written seriously and wish to know more about what they thought and felt ; and what relation these things have to beauty, truth and other first principles.

To appreciate through the active exertion of trying to express oneself,—I suppose it might be called a synthetic-analytic process,—is a process I feel whereby one is likely to acquire a taste, sensibility and critical judgment more truly personal than by some entirely analytic approach, in which only parts and not the whole of the individual is engaged at any one time. In other words, the making of an artist is the best way to make a critic. This is a dogmatic assertion, I know, without any of the decencies of scientific proof ; but educational theory has to live on such statements until the time when psychology can become an inductive science ; and even then she will live on such statements. '*Il est des choses qu'on ne prouve pas.*' But with regard to this assertion, I know that in the arts appreciation is not confined to the practising artist. Anyone can look at a picture or listen to music and say ' I like that ' or ' I don't like it ',

or ' This is beautiful, that ugly '. These are a criticism of values, a personal estimate ; but what the teacher is concerned with is whether such an estimate is worth consideration by others, who are trying to arrive at a standard of taste, and whether he who makes it, by making it, increases the value of his own personality, and how he himself can contribute to such a possible increase by what he does when this critic is still a boy.

A music teacher does not seem to form musical judgment in a pupil who is learning from him how to play scales, nor an art master to instil any appreciation into one who is learning to copy a picture ; though it is difficult to say in either case what aesthetic consequence any effort to master a certain medium is likely to have. But certainly there are brilliant executants on the piano, who seem to have no sensitive realisation of what they are doing, and very skilful manipulators of paint, who can only use it to show that they are without artistic appreciation. These are, however, examples of technique attained without reference to the communication of a self ; and it is quite easy to see that one would not expect critical appreciation from them as one would from those who, though they may have no special technical equipment in painting or music, yet are by nature sensitive to sound, shape and colour, and by the exercise of that sensitiveness not only make this experience an integral part of their self, but even get an intuitive understanding of the art by which they are affected. Here one has taste without the recognised practice of the art. But even here one might ask whether the appreciation might not be more satisfying to the individual and of more value

to others, if it were more articulate ; and whether it might not be a truer estimate of the values contained in the original, if it was made under a disciplined fusion of emotion and intellect similar to that under which the original was created—that is, supposing it to be a work of art.

And even though it could be proved that to be a musician or a painter was no help towards the appreciation of music or painting, one could not argue from this that the same thing applied to the art of words. For it seems to me there is a practical difference between this art and that of music, for example ; and one relevant to this problem of appreciation. The difference may be only one of degree, but enough to upset an analogy. It is this : everyone who is not drunk uses words to convey his meaning, but only a few use music. Everyone has to have a certain technique of words. So far as concerns school, that technique should become an art. In an educated world all critics would be artists ; and in order to make all artists critics, it would seem an unnatural procedure to develop criticism on a system of its own, when there is already to hand the system by which a certain taste in how to express oneself, a technical taste, as it were, has been formed.

But it may be claimed that music is also a form of communication, in fact a language without the local barriers of speech, and yet to acquire a critical taste in it, some might say, nothing is needed but to listen to its rhythm and melodies, and allow values to arrange themselves through emotional responses. But if this is true of music, it is true because music is not socially articulate ; a rhythm or a melody can be perceived

by the individual without the help of socially devised symbols. Verbal language, on the other hand, has a very restricted meaning if the listener has not learned the details of the intellectual pattern which society has given it and is continually giving it. There is certainly some distance between a knowledge of this intellectual pattern and such a thing as poetic appreciation. To know the syntax underlying a poem does not produce a state in which one has a 'heightened consciousness' of reality : but without a realisation, subconscious it may be, of the formal conditions of syntax under which the poem is produced, I do not see how that state is reached. For even in modernist poetry there is great dependence on conventional syntactical forms : on traditional ways of conveying a meaning through word order and grouping. The dependence is there even where traditional forms are changed ; for the emotional effect is partly derived from the substitution of a new for an old form. Even so great an individualist in words as James Joyce remains to a great extent a traditionalist in syntax ; and I cannot but feel that he would have invented a completely new syntax if he had thought it would add to the artistic value of his work. Another modern writer, D. H. Lawrence, seems, as 'a poet, to have made his sensitive perception of reality less effective than it might have been by denying it this artistic discipline—one might almost say, social discipline ; for a long line of labourers has been at this communal work of making a syntactical bridge between the fixed symbol and the floating idea.

Once again this leads me to favour the practice of the forms of expression as a group approach towards

appreciation ; balanced by the liberty of the individual in what he expresses apart from group work—to prevent any tendency to traditionalism for its own sake. This does not mean that I would exclude critical analysis—that would be impossible, and, in any case, inconsistent with my aim, if such analysis is treated as a technique in reading preparatory to expression—nor that I would exclude such analysis in the form known as the ‘ appreciation ’ lesson. No teacher of English can afford to exclude any type of experiment. Unfortunately in practice the odds are that he will prefer to do without the lesson of a synthetic type or composition, as much as he can, finding it more arduous because less centrally controlled.

At the present day also he has a further temptation to direct his teaching as far as possible towards analytical literary criticism. If he has never thought very much about the origins of his own way of expressing himself, and if he is not a man of many ideas, he has at hand a whole circle of modern literary criticism from which to borrow ideas. It is partly the facility with which I have found prospective teachers borrow these ideas, and not only the ideas but their terminology, either with or without inverted commas, that makes me feel that those who are going to produce some independence of judgment and genuinely individual taste in others, should try some other method of doing it. This plagiarism is not unnatural, for this *haute école* of critics themselves tend to follow a circus circle of words, either in obedient succession, or if any move in a reverse direction, still within the ring. In spite of that, they should be read without fail ; they

have among them men of taste and intellect ; and they can stimulate thought, if the reader himself is also critical, in a way in which books on educational method do not stimulate. At present there are only one or two books, containing a school method, derived from this type of literary criticism.

Judging by these and their sources, I should say their chief danger is that they build a superstructure of taste on insufficient foundations. There is a too conscious outlook on everything, for there is no gradual provision from one stage to another of a subconscious background. Even when expressly framed for school use, they do not take enough account of the fact that a boy is not an adolescent, nor an adolescent a man, and between the first and last there are differences of mental growth and experience. This disregard of the human element is likely to tend to intellectual forcing of the immature ; and what is meant to be a genuine attempt to produce independence and sincerity of taste may become merely the dictation of half understood *clichés*. Present an adult with two poems, the authors' names withheld, and ask him for a critical comparison of their value to him ; and you may reasonably expect him to give a judgment of his own, if he is widely read and his habits of reading have long formed an integral part of his experience, and also if his judgment is asked for under natural conditions,—but I do not think you may reasonably expect this of a boy of sixteen. Actually, even with the adult this method of testing appreciation is not as likely to produce as truly personal a judgment as might be thought. To face him with two anonymous poems, as though with two unknown



chemical salts under laboratory conditions, may seem satisfactory to those who wish to guard literary criticism from the odium of being unscientific. But in the effort to get a really scientific analysis, free from sentimental prejudices, stock responses and so on, the result may quite easily be that there will be no genuine emotional response at all, or that the mood for the appreciation of one poem may be much more difficult to feel under such selected conditions than the mood for the other. If that is so, the judgment given will come most conveniently from an intellectual response, a conscious gymnastic, a solemn exercise in an unreal balance room.

Such conditions applied to a school class may produce some genuine first-hand criticism among a small number of boys. It is also likely to spread a dependence on dogmatism as complete as any which it is attempting to supersede. Again, with adults who have been scientifically trained in criticism, there is a tendency to adopt dogmatic formulae : as though being presented with a *tabula rasa* had made them all the more ready to accept the first positive opinion that came to their ears. This fault I feel is caused to a great extent by the lack of an ordered approach to the critical test, and I fear the same result in school for the same reasons. And judging by the only evidence yet available I should say that the teacher who adopts this method will not fail to be dogmatic. It may flatter a boy of sixteen to avail himself of suggested comments such as ' the taut insistent style of — is relatively convincing ', ' Cogent in rhythm and imagery ', ' profoundly significant ', ' inevitable and personal ', ' the subtler and more indi-

vidual poem', 'magnificent in rhythm and palpable expression', 'a good specimen of the naïve-profound', 'so dropsically loaded with abstractions that anything said is effectually muffled', '— prose', (the blank denotes a literary magazine not in favour with the critic) and so on. But I doubt whether this terminology will be an advantage to him, as an arbiter of his own tastes, or will make one more member of a critical public able to recognise genius when it appears incognito. It is dangerous to become a premature critic of poems born out of adult emotions; and of these there are quite a number.

My own bias is towards a teacher of English who can replace the teacher of classics: in fact, I feel that the English course can only attain to its due influence in a school if it can supply to a greater number what classics supplied to a few; and perhaps with greater vitality. Saunderson of Oundle criticised the classics as forming an oligarchic tradition of culture, suited to a dominant and acquisitive class; his criticism was valid and to the point. Valuable as they were as a training in English language and thought, they made during the nineteenth century a convenient barrier to the new scientific and democratic outlook. They opposed by interpretation a static to a changing world: the length of time needed for their study limited their advantages to the comparatively few; they were the accepted means of educating established power. In the present century they have lost much of their cultural prestige; and considering their tradition, one can but sympathise with the modern school, which prefers to make a selection of their clear thought through translations

and spend the time saved on other studies. But in doing this, it loses something still irreplaceable—the verbal discipline, the feeling for language,—one might almost say, compelled by the classical method, when that method was under the control of an intelligent scholar. The value of that method did not lie so much in the brilliant imitations of Greek and Latin authors achieved by the elect few, but in the efforts made by the much greater number of the less successful. In the making of even an indifferent translation or composition these had been compelled to observe the forms of their own language, to sift its vocabulary, to become sensitive to its idiom ; and all in contact with a wider range of ideas than any other subject, as taught in the past, allowed.

It is true that pedantry was also a very common atmosphere in the study of the classics. With a dead language that may be inevitable. English, as a living language, should be less liable to that disease. It should also suffer less from that waste of dullness, caused by driving unacademic minds through the mechanical obstacles of a language with which they could feel very little in common. But if English is to provide for the boy leaving at sixteen something of what the classics provide for the boy continuing to a university, it must give him that discipline of thought which comes from such mental exercises as are needed for ‘ translation ’ and ‘ composition ’. I would even venture the belief that until English teaching evolves a method as strict as the classics, it will never be an attractive subject to the average boy. In the past both teacher and boy have been choked by the surfeits

of a drab unappetising plenty. The boy, no matter what his age, has very often been gorged on a memory routine of grammar, literary museum pieces, and essays which were beyond the scope even of an anxious parent. He has been asked to write three or four pages on a subject of which he had no direct experience, when he could not write one sentence which satisfied him as an expression of what he meant to say : much less connect half a dozen sentences in a cogent order. And, but, however, so, then, nevertheless, he distributed over his paper according to some obscure law of proportion ; the natural guide to their use, that of sense, was absent. Before he could express a group of ideas in a simple form in a dozen words, he was straggling through a tangle of ill-adjusted clauses overgrown with ambiguities. And the teacher has often enough wasted years conscientiously correcting the confusion he has encouraged—endless written corrections which the boy may have read, but only out of a sense of duty—probably a mistaken sense of duty. The fetish of much writing, I believe, still continues : even though there has been a passing from the essay to something closer to the boy's experience, such as the description of what he may have seen or heard. But in spite of the change, old attitudes have not died. The teacher, who has nothing of the artist in his aim, still tends to ignore the fact that the composition of a complete whole is not the way to practise experimentally the better expression of its details. Michelangelo, for example, did not use the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel to learn his particular treatment of anatomy. He used a small piece of paper ; and if necessary, concentrated there on an elbow.

Cézanne may seem to have used wholes more experimentally ; but to master such elements in detail as are contained in ' Landscape with Bridge ', he did not use that canvas itself, but others, in which, as it were, careless of the whole he could treat successfully some part of it. The teacher of English, however, even in descriptive work is still inclined to respect the essay tradition, and for him the essay means a set piece of composition, not a sketch, a certain quota of writing, not an effort to translate an idea to paper. The result is that subjects are chosen for the number of words they will extract from the pen : so they carry the boy well beyond the limit of his impressions of what he has experienced. He avoids shortage by vague borrowing ; and the vague thus becomes as useful to him as the clear. Further, the teacher who is not himself in the habit of composing is not always aware of the difficulties which quite a simple descriptive subject may present. To him an essay on ' Might is right ', an account of a railway journey, and a description of a dog may all seem to be of equal difficulty—it may not occur to him, viewing the matter from the end of a blue pencil and naturalised to its stock responses, that a boy may hang on some simple sequence of time and place in a railway journey, but that looking at all parts of a dog simultaneously he may be at a loss to say which comes first : the muzzle or the tail. And again confusion of idea leads to confusion of statement ; and the value is taken from a fruitful type of writing, description : the fault a failure to prepare the parts before attempting the whole.

In contrast, no boy would be expected to attempt a

*Latin Composition before he had had detailed practice* in forms of expression and in arrangement of ideas, likely to be used later in the continuous piece. Of course, this procedure is due to the difficulty of the language. Without the practice of exercises in which single points are segregated, the boy could not get enough grip of the Latin to transfer into it a complex of ideas from the English. However, the fact remains that throughout the whole of the Latin course there is progressive organisation of detail with a view to combining it for the clear transference of greater and greater complexities from one language to the other.

Naturally a method, suitable if one is adapting ideas to words through the medium of a dead and living language, cannot be imposed on the process of adapting ideas to words through the medium of a living language alone. But I would suggest that the teacher of English might at least study that method with profit.

To object that copying of the classical method would lead to excessive formalism, is irrelevant. I do not propose mere imitation. To object that too strict a method would be death to imagination, is only relevant where a teacher does not realise the implications of the aim I have suggested. If a teacher is servant of his method, the boy will suffer in imagination. On the other hand, imagination does not grow out of vague strugglings of thought and expression. However, as I certainly fear the readiness of many teachers to sell their souls for the hire purchase of any stock method,—I should say that the more any suggested method for an English course was merely a tendency to method, the better. To object that any stress on composition

in English will increase the burden of corrections already heavy, is to misread what I have intended. Stress on composition is intended to mean stress on quality, not quantity of written work. There will probably be less written work, and more of oral ; but the written work will be much more of a kind which the teacher can correct, as it is written, straight away before the class—and so correction will be both more economical and more efficient. If no other means are of avail, I would go so far as to limit the size of the scraps of paper on which much of the composition was done : so that a teacher could take up half a dozen of them as a class was working, and because their contents had a definite sharp focus, see at a glance what point needed emphasis and have a clear index there and then of whether his treatment of the matter had already been defective or not, or how he must vary it. Such clues would save much ineffective breath. The teacher himself, like the boy, would have something definite to guide his words. It is one thing to be wise before the event, another to be wise after the event : but what helps both parties is seeing eye to eye during the event. However, this is to anticipate ; and I will leave the matter there until I come to consider method in more detail.

There is one last, and I think, important stress to make in an aim, in which, if there is anything novel, it is, after all, only new stresses on what is familiar to most. The teacher himself should be an artist as well as a critic. As a critic he can inform the intellect : make one cognisant of merits and defects in one's own and other's work, and if his criticism has the suggestive

power of personality, it will stimulate to creative effort in the boy ; but to sustain that creative effort, to assist its successful delivery, he must also have been through the adventure of creation himself ; otherwise, even if he has imagination, he will not be able to diffuse its synthetic power : not having experienced either the pain or pleasure of creation, he can neither give strength in the one nor recognise the other, when it is present in the class-room. He is liable to dictate, where reticence is needed : to be explicitly personal, where the most fertile hint is an impersonal suggestion. His analysis never becomes another's synthesis. So far as he is concerned, other and self remain for the boy self and other without end, and even the chances of a slight originality are lost.

This may all sound like a counsel of perfection. And it may be said, it is a waste of time proposing any aim if it cannot be carried out without postulating an exceptional man. What faces the school is mostly an average man, who with the best intentions in the world is neither skilful artist nor intelligent critic. Is it in the power of any aim to turn him into either ?

No aim, consciously achieved, will without further help produce a Keats or a Coleridge or an Arnold ; but I would suggest that, given average capacity, a desire to achieve the present aim would make a man at least a better craftsman in his use of English before and with a class, and through that improvement what intelligence he had as a critic, would be best adapted to those whose literary judgments were still adolescent. I might quote the three poets I have named as instances in which, apparently, art has made a sound introduc-



tion to criticism ; but, as a nearer comparison, I will take the average teacher of classics. He has been, perforce, a craftsman ; where his technical skill has become to some extent an art, he has developed a helpful appreciation of the formal elements, at least, of language. This development, it is true, has more rarely extended to the substance expressed by the language. But one would expect that. By the difficulties of an ancient language the man of average capacity is too much confined to a criticism of words, where he should be a critic of reality. He suffers too from this further difficulty : that the content of experiences found in that past with which he usually deals is different from the experience familiar to him as a social, economic, psychological being ; in fact, it is a trying past to live up to and he compromises by accepting a traditional version of it, and becoming shallow and pedantic in critical outlook.

If the average teacher of English were under the same responsibility to master a technique of expression, having less hindrances to embodying his own experience in the content of what he expressed, he should be more of an artist in words. If his authority with a class—in the most liberal sense—depended on his being able to make a ' fair copy ' of a descriptive piece, for example, which the class was attempting, in having to make an original venture, and not merely appraising that in which another had taken the creative risk, in thus involving his whole self and not only his least vulnerable part, the intellect, he would have had the emotional experience necessary to constructive criticism.

It might be said that if average teachers were thus to become just marginal artists and marginal critics, the English course would finally become merely a nursery *de petites pensées arrangées en jolies phrases*, embryo members of an English Academy. If class work only produced the charming arrangement of ideas, I should be satisfied to let the individual revolt against their pettiness : as Shakespeare against Holofernes. Holofernes helped him for all that.

## SUBJECT MATTER

‘ Nous sommes toujours au même point, comment *prouver* à quelqu’un que la *Transfiguration* (de Raphaël) est admirable ? ’

One man may admire this Raphael, another may be bored by it and consider a cabinet photograph of himself in all ways a better work of art. Just relative tastes irreconcilable. Stendhal seemed to accept this as an impasse. The teacher cannot. One adolescent may admire, or enjoy reading Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, or the *Odes* of Keats, another dislike these and enjoy and consider of more value the current serial in a morning paper or Kipling’s *Barrack-Room Ballads*. But if the teacher is going to help in the expression of a self, that self must be as far as possible worth expressing ; and he cannot therefore be content that the second of these two should be satisfied with his standard of literary enjoyment. Probably if the adolescent is sixteen to seventeen, he has left any change of taste too late. It should have begun with boyhood. But in any case, the change does not mean that the second adolescent should have identical tastes with the first ; he may admire neither *Tom Jones* nor the *Odes* of Keats ; but he should have, at least, periods in which his mental atmosphere is such that he can understand another’s enjoyment of those works.

It is to that extent that the teacher must aim at

solving the question put by Stendhal. He will not do it by dictating his own admirations : however much he may admire Hopkins, for example, he will not by the subtlest dictated analysis convince a boy that Hopkins is worth more than Cowper, if that boy is more of an extrovert than an introvert, if, that is, temperamentally, the boy looks on life with the more social eye of Cowper. I do not say that the boy's temperament may not be gradually modified ; but this gradual may make the formation of taste less spectacular than some teachers would wish, and not worth their patience. The man, for example, who feels that his aesthetic education was completed by *Women in Love*,—actually nothing should be completed in the teacher—may find that the *Idylls of the King* is the work which most attracts a middle-school class in a middle-class school. He may despair of this unconscious reversion to Victorian snobbishness; but he may be misjudging the causes of the attraction. The *Idylls of the King* may be a sound approach to a desirable aesthetic standard. His reward may come when with the same class, now a sixth, one of them asks him how far one can take seriously the ideas of a novelist, who is also very much of a snob : and when in turn he asks *à propos* of what ideas in particular, he receives the answer, *Women in Love*.

Whatever the heart-searchings over particular authors, and these must be severe, if anything worth while is to come of them, the aim of the teacher is not so much to distribute first, second and third prizes and an occasional championship medal to literary live-stock as to promote pleasure in looking at a good grade of animal ; or to put it in another way, he has to induce

qualities which will, when they mature, make their possessor a man of more sensitive tastes, not necessarily a connoisseur of letters, but a man capable to some extent of a detachment from the immediately useful, capable also of more than temporary gratifications : he has to induce a potential state of mind, without which one would no more think of reading a page of Shakespeare instead of going to see an attractive woman on the films than of wasting two hours on a piece of work, when in one you could passably disguise its most obvious defects. There is, of course, room in the world of taste for both Dietrich, or her equivalent, and Shakespeare. I hardly think he would have denied it ; but the trouble is that whereas a natural appetite will always readily admit her merits, it is doubtful whether he would be even given a hearing were it not that there is always a certain body of people who are concerned to acquire and retain an imaginative vigilance of mind on the one hand, and on the other a desire to be consistent to some internal unity-in-becoming : people who achieve, as it were, from time to time, an active poise between these tendencies to and from their individual centre. I am rather doubtful of this mechanistic metaphor, but there it is. If it does suggest a definition of culture, it may seem a rather commonplace embodiment of it to the teacher, who would like to be remembered as the man who first stimulated, say, a Rimbaud. But as a working hypothesis of culture, one cannot postulate some formula which would not apply to individuals, in the sense that individuality must be measured by some common human denominator expressible in terms of consciousness. One cannot base

it on unique adventures into the wilderness of the subconscious, or beneath it. Matthew Arnold, writing from the text *Sweetness and Light*, may not have made many Philistines realise that bourgeois sobriety, like patriotism, is not by any means enough. But I doubt whether he would have made as much impression if he had taken for his text *The Acrid and the Dark*, or *Ulysses in a Waste Land*.

To fuse a greater intellectual curiosity—Arnold's aim—with a greater passion for human perfection, even defined as *εὐφροσύνη*, is a cultural task which will keep most teachers busy, and seem sufficiently a problem, when they face an average English class, and know that the fusion must be an experience which interests the boy, that is, must be connected with other experiences which interest him. Nor do periodic examinations make the task easier or more what it should be, a pleasure. Those who probe our tastes and pry into our knowledge do not seem able to encourage in us much enlargement of spirit—if I may use a word of rather obscure reference—not as much as a Barra woman gets from the coast-line of her island, which she may sit contemplating for an hour, after she has climbed a hillside and milked her cow. I have heard one of those islanders use of her Atlantic fore-shore almost the same words as Charles V of the city of Florence—according to Izaak Walton's quotation. I have rarely felt the atmosphere of those words in a room from which some examination is about to select additions to our educated classes.

However, I need not dilate on obstacles. The teacher is going to improve taste ; he is going to en-

large the range of a boy's experience by introducing him to others whose experience, recorded in books, we accept as most expressive of human nature at its best or its most imaginative—or to describe it negatively, human nature not expressed in any official or institutional capacity ; the teacher will deal with that material under another heading. This introduction, unless it is to be a mere matter of form, must be according to the boy's understanding and subject to the conditions of his intellectual and emotional growth. Whatever variety the teacher makes in his choice of verse or prose, according to his own personal tastes, to be effective it must be conditioned by the boy's mental age. And I propose in the following pages to consider this principle in more detail. But, first, I must refer to other limitations of choice : extending over what is read in school.

What is read by a boy out of school is his own choice. It may be affected by the direct or indirect suggestion of the teacher ; but it must be as varied as the tastes of the readers themselves. Of the restrictions which may control what is read in school, the following seem to be most important to notice. Quantity is affected by the fact that a boy has usually to learn how to read intelligently even after he has passed the stage when he can decipher words correctly and with ease. In an article on the art of reading Mr Desmond MacCarthy once wrote : ' I wish those who educated me had drawn my attention to the fact that one reads books with different ends in view : (1) to increase one's knowledge ; (2) to judge them ; (3) to enjoy them—and the method of reading proper to

each end is different'. Whether one can separate in this way the purposes for which one reads, might be debated; and in any case the choice of books read under these categories is not a matter for the English teacher alone; but in so far as it is his special function to equip a boy with technical proficiency in his own language, any training in how to read must limit very much the number of books read in school.

In the second place, as one's aim is not only to extend a boy's power in his self—to use Thring's phrase—through contact with other minds, but also to make that power communicable, reading and expression should be directly related; reading matter may be selected for comparison of similar or dissimilar ideas on a topic which is of real concern to a boy, or for a comparison of their arrangement or the manner in which they are expressed. This alliance between reading and expression will also limit the extent of what is read in school.

Further, the fact that what is read in school will concern a class, limits its selection both in quantity and type: in quantity, because a group does not travel at the pace of its fastest member; in type, because publishers only supply certain types of matter at group prices; and because groups as groups naturally exclude themes or particular treatment of themes which, as individuals, they find to their taste.

This may seem to be a formidable list of restrictions; but there is no virtue in quantity of books read. Books read in common are only the starting-point for individual exploration, and the instrument whereby individual reading may see more clearly both



what is in the lines on a page and what is between them also. One might get rid of the group and flood each individual with a separate assignment of verse and prose ; and in return for early and dangerous periods of constipation one would have thrown away the valuable activities of communication.

To prescribe even types of serious reading for any particular school age is a very difficult matter. By serious I mean here that which does not attract simply because it is obviously useful, like *Hints on Constructing a Wireless Set*, or simply because it provides temporary satisfactions, like a crime story : and also I am not concerned here with serious reading related to a special subject such as Geography, Economics and so on, that is, reading for information. The difficulty is that the choice must refer to a standard boy of a particular school age, and so far as I know, there is as little psychological evidence for what may be successfully grafted on to the natural tastes of this standard boy as there is for what we may actually regard as our standard boy from one age to another. If it were less of a difficulty, I think eminent literary minds would have given us more positive information than they have, for our guidance. T. S. Eliot—who is more informative on this point than most of them—devotes to it almost four pages out of a hundred and fifty-six in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*. It is true that his book is concerned with the taste of the adult—but even so, it is strange that he should restrict to a note of four pages what he deliberately calls ‘ the development of taste in poetry ’. But perhaps, though there is little positive information in this note, one

should be grateful that Mr Eliot has suggested that there is a difficulty confronting the teacher. Among other true things he says 'the deliberate attempt to grapple with poetry which is not naturally congenial and some of which never will be, should be a very mature activity indeed ; an activity which well repays the effort, but which cannot be recommended to young people without grave danger of deadening their sensibility to poetry and confounding the genuine *development* of taste with the sham acquisition of it. . . . We may even say that to have better " taste " in poetry than belongs to one's state of development, is not to " taste " anything at all. One's taste in poetry cannot be isolated from one's other interests and passions. . . .'

Mr Eliot is here referring to poetry, but as he refrains from defining what poetry is, I feel at liberty to extend the application of his remarks to all that is not naturally and immediately congenial, whether in verse or prose,—taking for the moment Biély's definition of poetry, when he proclaims himself a poet and states that he writes in prose form to save paper ! Having done this, I recommend his warning to those who would demand from the immature an application to what is ' yond their experience. It is one thing for a boy to read a book much of which is beyond his understanding, because he is taken by a fancy for the apparently uncongenial, and to get from it gleams of something which touches him with wonder or even an innocent vanity, and to have also a sense of adventure in signalling a new shape on his vague horizon. It is another to insist on his making a public confession to the effect that what he has been reading is typical of

good English style and its content has interested him from three or even four points of view.

Of course, in introducing an immature to a mature mind successfully much depends on the imaginative sympathy of the individual teacher. One man may interest a class aged eleven in the Coverley papers ; another use them as good English nails to adorn a literary coffin. But even though I have seen an apparently successful lesson with a class aged eleven both on Sir Roger de Coverley and on Lamb's ' Essay on Roast Pork '—lessons in which the essays have been read with skill—yet they have been rather in the nature of a *tour de force*. Their apparent success has disguised an unsuitability in choice of material—though I must qualify this statement in respect of the essay on Roast Pork. That is, after all, a tale about a pig, and all animals are interesting to anyone of eleven not actually born inside a generating chamber : but a tale so trellised about with sophisticated humour—humour emerging from at least a dozen different types of adult reaction, that one is not surprised to see the subject trail out a lesson in complete apathy in spite of the pig. The appreciation also of Sir Roger de Coverley depends very much on sensitiveness to shades of social behaviour not only present but past ; shades with which we need not trouble childhood, or even more advanced ages.

A similar kind of misfit I should consider the recommendation of Dorothy Osborne's *Letters* as reading for a middle-school class—it was recommended in a syllabus for girls, it is true, but however much more mature they are than boys at sixteen, they are not quite mature enough to diagnose the symptoms of a woman in love.

Dorothy Osborne to a certain extent protects her intimacy of feeling with wit and shrewd judgment ; but even at that, the discrepancy in understanding between the expressing and the reacting mind seems to turn a unique experience into something resembling a close-up. At any rate, I am grateful to those who neglected to fill my earlier years with systematic lists of reading. Their neglect allowed me to read these letters for the first time, when I was long past either school or university ; and by that time I was almost of age to appreciate them.

However, all this is a negative approach to the problem of choice ; and what a good many teachers really want is a list of titles age by age and class by class. They can find something to satisfy their hunger in the books on teaching English mentioned in Appendix B. Having satiated themselves, it would be a good thing if then they began gradually to work out the problem of suitable books to their own pattern. If they had to provide for early childhood instead of late boyhood and after, they would find their task much simpler. Nursery Rhymes, Fairy and Folk Tales are children's classics. Verse and prose alike, they contain experience apparently far removed from that of childhood, though at the age to which the first two, at least, appeal, there is so little discrimination in the thought-content of one experience and another, that in a sense it may be said that any experience is natural to a child. What then is the reason why these rhymes and tales are particularly attractive ? It might be said that the attractiveness is directly suggested by the adult who recites them. That this is not true seems probable from the

failure of adult suggestion when it attempts to improve on the original. I am inclined to think, and I leave proof to the psychologist, that they attract because they satisfy certain expectations natural to early childhood ; I would suggest that as these tend to persist beyond childhood, a word or two in detail about them may not be out of place. They attract by their simple and maximal activity, and clear, broad outline : in the best of them there is nothing superfluous, nothing squeezed. When they use detail, it is in sharp focus and easy to visualise. The actors have, like kittens, great vitality. They are not confined by logic, but they do not strive after the absurd. They are too serious for that : but their seriousness is not always without humour.

‘ Ba Ba, black sheep, have you any wool ?  
Yes, sir, No, sir, Three bags full.’

Syntax is their servant, not their master.

‘ Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle !  
The Cow jumped over the moon.’

The scope of their action seems to satisfy the listener—I dare not venture more than seems—that is, it is inevitable that they should begin, proceed and end as they do.

If the quotations had been written in Greek, and these comments removed to another page, I wonder how many would have taken them as applying to Greek drama ; but though a comparison between nursery rhymes and classical drama might tempt one to be ingenious, it also confronts one with an avalanche of a

question, whether there are such things as natural criteria of taste, and taste then becomes in Rousseau's uncompromising words 'merely the power of judging what is pleasing or displeasing to most people'. But in passing warily by this question, it is interesting to note that, so far as one can judge from translations, the work of such modern Russian writers as Babel, Gabrilovitch and Kataev has much in common with the nursery rhyme.

To continue a little further with this topic, before I come to a higher school age,—'the mouse ran up the clock : the clock struck one : the mouse ran down'. There is the action ; clear of any insecure statement of motives ; but the action, as thus communicated, runs rather like a mouse without a tail : and the important tail is 'hickory-dickory-dock'. Add this piece of nonsense to the sense, and the sense has greater communicative power. Can one suggest that a symbol of pure sound may, as an integral part of a poem, make all the difference to our reactions ? At least, this 'hickory-dickory-dock' stresses alliterative echoes in the words of the action ; it stresses the syllabic echo, rhyme : and it makes the whole start into a bold *staccato* rhythm. From which we may gather that the youthful ear is attracted by verse, when it is obvious in form ; also we may remind ourselves that the boy begins by being a listener, and for a long time in his school life he will accept with interest through his ears what he will not trouble to understand with his eyes.

There are two other points in these early classics I would like to consider briefly. One is what may seem to some their flagrant use of repetition ; repetition,

for example, of the kind one gets in the story of the three bears : the same action repeated in the same words. There is, of course, variation through the voice of the narrator, but let her change the words, and it will be seen how much of the effect and interest depends on exact repetition. It is as though a change offends some natural sense of order and interrupts the true way to a satisfying climax : as though without the repetition there is not enough emphasis to make an appreciable contrast ; or, it may be, the child feels that with too much variation it would lose the pleasure of suspense. Again and again in these tales one has the man with three sons or three daughters, each of whom has very much the same experiences, but two establish a resemblance preparatory to a more effective contrast in the differing third. One of the most popular, and, I think, most successful in form of the Disney Cartoons is the ' Three Pigs ' : it securely establishes those resemblances without which the final difference would be impossible, and it takes three pigs to do it. Two might theoretically provide a satisfactory contrast, but not in aesthetic practice ; and four would be an error in economy. It is little wonder that the number three plays an important part in the arrangement of ideas and their verbal expression. One may say that, of course, repetition is an essential element in all patterns. Even an unskilled ear may detect it in the strong framework of a Beethoven movement, though it may be deaf to the exquisitely sensitive variations. It cannot fail to feel how the recurring ' I ' or recurring imperative in some of D. H. Lawrence's poems provide a pattern, even where there are no

artistic variations. But my point here is that the nursery rhyme may attract as much by its form as by its content,<sup>1</sup> and that the attraction of its formal elements may be not restricted to one age; and further, that if we can select for any age material whose form is attractive, it should help to interest a boy in the content itself, even when that does not seem to be immediately congenial but yet is really close to the range of his normal experience. Also I wish to suggest that we may often injure taste through not heeding its simple manifestations.

Finally of the nursery rhyme, it is like the folk tale, a story; and, as such, satisfies what I take to be a desire in the child to project the self into something external to it, as a way of gaining knowledge and stature. The child identifies itself with a fictitious agent and so enlarges its world; and not only the child but the boy, the adolescent and the man also,—as long as he wishes to grow. It is this identification of the self with another which, I suppose, has led some people to withhold from children stories in which the events come in great part from the imagination, and replace them by contact with actual phenomena and meticulous sense training. That is a question concerning which one can only say in passing that a man with a stunted imagination is no greater asset to the world than one with no sense of the actual. But whether or no one admits the imaginative story into the curriculum, one cannot exclude the tendency to self-dramatisation; and intelligently controlled, it

<sup>1</sup> I am assuming here for the sake of convenience that these are separable.



seems to be a power which can be of great use in composition. The recognition that it is there, alone might prevent teachers burdening a class with the task of writing on what has to be written without any compelling intention ; for example, many boys who fail before a subject, because it seems too impersonal to be identified in any way with themselves, might well succeed if it was suggested to them to write on such-and-such a thing as if they were so-and-so—that is, if indirectly a definite attitude were suggested. I do not suggest this as a substitute for a suitably chosen topic. A topic is only suitably chosen when one can make it part of oneself.

And further, I would hazard that this power of self-dramatisation may be an aid to imaginative writing of a high order. For example, is it not probable that Keats identified himself with Cortez in the lines :

‘ Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien ’—

and it is the completeness of the identification which makes the simile a piece of reality rather than a clever, intellectual figure of speech ? One might invent more brilliant similes to end that sonnet, but the intellect does not commit the person, and so only produces a brilliant simile. Is it then impossible that the boy who used this power in expressing himself would not gain an insight into the difference between what one might call, for short, a true and a false figure of speech : that is, the critical distinction might grow, as it were,

out of himself and therefore be his taste, and if he were asked for an explicit judgment later on a so-called figure of speech, the material for it would be in his own mind and the judgment would consequently be made with real mental insight ?

This may seem a far cry from the nursery rhyme ; but I have taken what might seem to some a negligible thing in the formation of taste, and rightly or wrongly stated ideas about it at length ; as a way of suggesting to the teacher that he should be wary of taking ugly ducklings at their face value.

For the age about which a boy enters a secondary school, or a little earlier, the saga or epic in verse or prose and the ballad are usually recommended, and narrative poems of simple heroic action. So far as one can generalise about the boy's mental growth, this would seem a suitable choice. It is all material in which there is simply plotted action.

Between eight and eleven there is a definite and partly conscious approach to what the adult knows as the actually existing world. By eight or earlier giants are dead : the boy no longer deceives himself that if he makes a mouse out of a handkerchief it will live on Indian corn ; but he is still very uncertain how gigantic men may be and what limits there may be to life itself. He is forming a very definite impression about the everyday facts of his domestic circle ; he may be quite skilled in its small economies ; practical, as a spider, in a small compass ; even calculating sharply concerning his own interests ; aware that any joint game must have rules, to serve either his protection or his profit. But still, like an explorer, outside his own tidy and familiar

cabin, he has an immense unknown about which he can only be curious ; and seeing the fringe of it, is inclined to make wild and satisfying conjectures : especially about its social geography. His father and the reigning sovereign may have similar functions for him—since the advent of the films this salutary confusion has probably been diminished ; and though elementary civics now enables him to recognise a policeman by more than instinctive knowledge of his appearance, the policeman has still probably greater executive prestige than a prime minister. Further, as an explorer, he lives on action : he takes his social cues from those who for him represent action. The locomotive and the horse are both picturesque types of action : the driver and the cowboy, who can control such movement, both attract. But of the two the cowboy has more bearing on social development, because through fiction the boy knows more of his dealings with society. The cowboy has also skill with knife, rope and gun ; and this manual dexterity probably commands more admiration from most boys than even that of a cricketer or footballer, because it suggests greater power and appeals to the pugnaciously energetic. How far pugnacity in the form of a love of battles is a natural or artificially produced feeling, I cannot say. Certainly most young animals are pugnacious ; and when there is a lack of pugnacity in a boy, there is often a somewhat morbid secretiveness. A simple vanity and an innocent cunning—proud Achilles, wily Odysseus—both attractive to the boy are in mimic or recorded warfare combined with the pugnacious. Both the epic and the ballad reproduce these qualities ; and for that reason

some might say they were unfit for school reading. But because Napoleon absorbed Plutarch, it does not follow that Plutarch is a source of Napoleonic ambition. Rousseau also absorbed Plutarch ; and certainly Plutarch did not inspire him with the rapacity and abuse of human values which were essential to the other. For both Plutarch enlarged the world, and in such enlargement ideals are formed for good or ill. So with the epic and ballad. They enlarge. That in itself would be enough. They breathe a spacious atmosphere free from sophisticated dust. In content they have much that is allied to the boy's experience ; they are the adventures of a poetic world, verging on historical constraints ; their characters are sometimes half child, half giant ; always in action, always capable of the superhuman and the super-suburban. A Nausicaa, for example, can be both princess and wash-woman ; and there is an equal simplicity of emotion which, though it conceals a depth beyond the boy's understanding, yet is free enough from personal intricacies to make him feel at home with them. In expression both epic and ballad are concise, direct and vigorous : like the cinema, they fill space with movement. They deal also with the film material, on which the boy glues a distended eye. But what is melodramatic crime and gangster psychology on the screen, through the filter of a greater mind becomes something of wider human reference. One of the most popular ballads, I suppose, is Macaulay's ' Horatius '. It may be a very ' false gallop of verses ' : but it does gallop. It is cinematic to the point of vulgarity ; it mixes blood with crude sentiment ; but it is boyish, its intellectual

and emotional atmosphere, in so far as they affect the boy, give him a contact with something likely to expand rather than contract his tastes. And though it is a small work compared with Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner', it may, because it is more intelligible to the boy, because it is a more serious rival to the cinema, actually be a greater power of attraction towards later more serious interests. Refined spirit comes from crude oil ; and in appearance one might not suspect any connection.

One may hope that because a boy seems to appreciate a line in a lyric you feel to be a flash of consummate art, he will search assiduously for more : he may, but it is a dubious way to spontaneity of taste. At least the search would seem more of an adventure, if it were attached to an admired personality. Robin Hood, for example, may do more than feast a boy in Sherwood on venison and show him how to outwit oppressors and send him chasing after imaginary deer among back alleys and dustbins. When the boy sees that the brick walls which surround him are no longer a forest of oaks, he may be still loth to relinquish contact with the heroic rebel. As it were in a half-conscious *In Memoriam*, he has a taste for history, in which the sheriff reappears in all official sobriety : he retains a certain feeling for poetic justice, a healthy suspicion of riches ; a sentiment for the green field and open air ; possibly a certain topographical zest, a reminder of threading his way through devious woodland paths ; but more to our immediate point, he has a watchful eye for any record of the hero's doings, which may satisfy an affectionate curiosity. And it is possible that many introductions

are made in this way. *Ivanhoe* may lead to *Old Mortality*; Sherwood to *Arden*, and *As You Like It* to *Anthony and Cleopatra*; 'All honour to bold Robin Hood' to 'Hyperion'; Peacock's *Maid Marian* to *Crotchet Castle* and a new outlook on the novel, from which eventually some discrimination might be made between *Bleak House*, *Madame Bovary*, *War and Peace*, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. All these ramifications may seem rather fantastic: but an introduction of this kind has personal energy behind it, and that can go a long way.

Incidentally some people complain that the ballad as a type of reading fails to interest a class. In practice I have seen it both succeed and fail. And my own impression is that where it has failed, all one could infer was that it was the teacher and not the class who found the material alien to his taste. It needs some imagination on the part of the average adult to put himself into an age where there are no modern conveniences, or to rush out of a school common-room straight on to the North Sea with Sir Patrick Spens, or from a chat with a headmaster over his fortnightly mark list to a conference in Valhalla or Olympus. On the other hand it is true that once a class has seen a film star masquerading and loping about as an epic hero, with the usual fritterings of sex appeal, the tone of which affects the boy even when he misjudges its meaning, then it is difficult to superimpose any other atmosphere on this layer of impressions.

With the boy round about ten, more use, it seems to me, might be made of the fact that he is at least as much at home with the animal as with the more strictly human

world : in these days one might extend the animal into the mechanical world, in so far as the mechanical world has an emotional bias of its own. For I am not concerned here with selecting material simply for increasing knowledge. A book on nature study may give a boy correct information on the colour of a blackbird's eggs or the habits of an eel ; and if such a book is written with the simple directness of a Defoe, it would be excellent as a reader where the reading of a book with a class is needed to improve its ease of reading and understanding at sight, the material being interesting in detail but not urging curiosity on too fast, as happens with a thrilling narrative. But a book of that kind contains matter for the reason and memory rather than the emotions ; and it is the approach not merely to an understanding of the emotive value of words but also to contact with the emotional experience of a more than average mind, which needs all the time in school that can be given to it. I am not suggesting that naturalists have not written with an emotional attitude. On the contrary, I think it might be possible to make a selection from such men as Walton, Gilbert White, Fabre, Darwin, Hudson—and probably there are many others of whom I am ignorant—a selection which would be something much more than merely informative. But what I should like to find is a missing Canterbury Tale about a pig ; the pig seems to have qualities which demand a Chaucer. We have prose tales about animals which are both of proved interest to boys and are not merely the gratification of a passing appetite : the *Jungle Books* of Rudyard Kipling, for example ; the tales of Seton Thomson also. But we need, though it

is rather late in the day, an English La Fontaine who will write fables without bothering to append a moral. He can include cams and gudgeon-pins, if he is so minded, as well as tortoises and hares ; but the poem of the machine is for adolescence. In the meantime, some adventurous spirit might collect an anthology of poems or fragments, in which bird and beast and stocks and stones are the theme. Prose selections would risk being too near an exegesis and would lack the obvious discipline of verse, and also the thrill of seeing a familiar thing wearing an unusual garment. He would have a hard task. Genius and the school have usually very different aims. And it is also expecting a good deal from the poet that he should bear the boy in mind when he is recording his impressions and experience. There is no lack of poets who have used the animal as a convenient carrier of subjective speculations, or under the pretext of describing it have whiled away a baroque hour. And even when they have respected its objective qualities, the mood of their interpretation often puts too great a distance between their treatment of it and the boy's familiar impressions. What one wants is something in words, like Velasquez' ' Turkey ' in paint, or a fruit from a Chinese brush, or a mallard by Crawhall, or even a Paul Potter bull,—a description, in which the artist has shown such skill of choice and expression that we forget him. What one gets is an abundance of animals, for example in D. H. Lawrence, whose features are drawn with photographic fidelity of detail, but then the picture so daubed with allusions to human nature mechanically suggested one by another, contact between intellect and emotion having failed,



that the result is often just a human grotesque peeping out of animal postures ; and, in any case, too symbolically elaborate for the blunt eye of youth : for any eye, in fact, not sharp enough to see a Crucifixion in the mating of a tortoise.

On the other hand, a poem like Wordsworth's 'Cuckoo' takes too much of the bird's natural habits for granted ; or rather, though it suggests a very definite feeling towards the bird, uses it too much as a vehicle of a verbal mood to satisfy the objective demands of a boy. Or, again, take the clever poem of Brooke's on the Fish : here there is a certain realism controlled by a certain academic attitude, and for the rest a nibbling at metaphysics, where a boy might expect more about a 'gudgeon'. And so runs the trouble. Burns pities himself in the person of a mouse, Herrick in that of a daffodil : and boys have little use for pity. He wants the animal or vegetable, and not the man. Shakespeare's description of the horse in 'Venus and Adonis'—and even of the hare there also—is sincere dealing with the horse, even though it is but incidental to his main theme. It is not Shakespeare and his *alter ego* doing a turn in a horse's skin. Though it is somewhat stylised, as in a tapestry, it has still objective life, likely enough to interest a boy : and yet in comparison with Drayton's *Polyolbion*, and its lists of birds, for example, it has an atmosphere likely to affect him emotionally.

In spite of the above criticisms, I still feel from the many instances in which poets have written about animals and simple objects of the countryside that a quest for an anthology would be interesting and with

good chance of success. It could not begin better than with John Clare—a rare store of poetic description, in which the thing described, whether turkey, grasshopper, ant, wagtail, yellowhammer, bird and beast or season of the year, is described for its own sake. As a source of suggestion and help in descriptive exercises, I will consider its use further when dealing with method of composition.

Some people might regard such an anthology as somewhat of an anachronism on the ground that the world is rapidly becoming denatured ; and man must more and more adjust himself to a scientific systematisation of existence, and just as he was quite ready to look on things through the eyes of Jupiter rather than Prometheus, so he will as readily look to the assembling of a machine as containing the principles on which he should live, to the exclusion of the principles, if we may call them such, on which natural growth still continues. For the time being, at any rate, the boy still feels, as it were, in terms of Nature. I base this statement on the response made by town children on all occasions when I have heard them asked to describe or listen to a poetic description of an animal. The earth still had for them apparently playing-fields other than those on which they sweated for health of body and a nominal health of mind. The earth still can correct the insolence of mind that comes of too easy possession of mechanical power. This may seem to have little to do with literary taste. It has much to do with artistic sensibility.

From twelve to fourteen one often finds a novel being read aloud in school. I should say this was an

unsuccessful waste of time. The novel requires usually the pace of the eye working alone. Otherwise, a thing whose importance lies in its continuity, may gall as much as taking a long journey in a train which stops at every station, almost at every signal. Also, the ample space of the novel allows the adult to analyse a motive at his leisure or empty a full pen over a chapter of contingent circumstances. But what the boy still wants, if he can get it, is to know who did what, and how it was done ; he also wants to know why ; but not at any length likely to interfere with his sense of activity. Of course, if the boy is out of reach of books except at school, then it may be necessary to read a *Treasure Island* or a *Hereward the Wake* in school—I would not say round a class, for to use for reading practice material which should be read for other ends is doubtful economy. Only good readers or the teacher himself should read where continuity of ideas is one of the points a class should learn to realise. Actually, if class reading of fiction were necessary, I should say that an Orczy or a Henty would interfere less with a boy's interest in serious literature than a Stevenson or a Kingsley, though it might do little to arouse such an interest. A boy of thirteen once asked me whether *The Scarlet Pimpernel* was a novel or a play first. A very pertinent question, it seemed. The novel for that age must be a clear pattern of action drawn in the simplest lines, that is, with the greatest economy of words ; an economy forced on the play by technical conditions. And it is quite possible to have a novel of adventure, planned on a lower level of thought, structurally and in relative tone values more successful than

one which attempts a higher range of idea and is for that reason included in respectable lists.

At fourteen the boy who reads at all is already a voracious reader. Some boys will swallow a library at that age. He is already becoming sentimental to the extent of preferring to have a flawless heroine all to himself, that is, at the enchanting distance of a printed page. Already before fourteen this hunger for reading is beginning to touch the stomach ; and fiction seems to be one of the most natural of private satisfactions. Connection with individual tastes in fiction may be made indirectly through the school library, and better still, through a class library, where that is possible ; and also through other ways, which will be considered under method. The success of the connection actually depends less on method than on the general relations of the teacher with his class ; no specialist literary qualifications can effect what requires the capacity of the whole man. But I may mention here that his taste in selecting material for oral composition should make a great difference in what the individual reads alone. He can suggest in that way interesting glimpses of an author which arouse a curiosity the individual will want to satisfy for himself. Some men might find it convenient to have a collection of such material ; to be used, if necessary, as a reader ; and in practice such collections are available for précis and reproduction. They can include material from special subjects,—historical biography, geographical discoveries, nature study and records of scientific research ; but it is obvious that such a mixed grill is not likely to be of much value to the

special subjects themselves. Suppose excerpts were taken from Drake's *Voyage round the World*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*, the *Paston Letters*, Borrow's *Lavengro*, the *Arabian Nights*, Defoe's *Great Plague*, Mungo Park's *Travels*, Cobbett's *Rural Rides*, *Don Quixote*, a Life of George Stephenson, Darwin's *Voyage of the 'Beagle'*, and so on to modern works. Such a selection would not help the specialist teacher. It might be a handicap to the English one : besides having the fault of all such books. They are convenient, but inelastic. At any rate, choice in such material must have regard primarily to its length and its narrative quality. The selections must be of varying length, each, as far as possible, a complete whole in itself ; so that the class has to vary its mental focus, and yet not feel that it is dealing with fragments. The narrative must have a clear movement and direction, its contexts plain, even though they carry unfamiliar words, and the more the better up to the limit the context will bear ; also, whatever the theme, it should have a fresh contagious mood and whet the imagination. Nothing dead or dying.

This is not a substitute for poetry. At the lowest ebb poetry should still be read, even if it is only to continue or form a habit for something apparently useless. If there is marked apathy to it, it will gain most by being strictly rationed. But one hopes for more than this, from what has been done at an earlier age. And it is a catastrophe if the boy who leaves school at fourteen should leave without some shred of an artistic ideal. He may still have that and dislike poems, but not poetry. One doesn't expect the average

errand-boy to grow up into a taste for Blake, any more than his double from a public school. But it would not be a national disaster if both of them could temper their cunning in small things with some respect for ideas which reflect the magnitude of the world. One of the most depressing comments on the relation of our public education to culture is the ease with which the not unintelligent, if not academically minded, boy of fourteen becomes in a year or two a being without internal resources, careless in thought, caricaturing all the commonplaceness of middle age : often a lout, usually a prey to opportunist conventions. He leaves school when he is entering a critical period of emotional changes. With the school as it is, mainly an administrative tit-bit, it is doubtful whether he would profit essentially by staying, unless he happened to come into contact with some member of the staff who was bigger than the system in which he worked. Fortunately there are many such, here and there. In the meantime, as he leaves at fourteen, if possible, he should leave with some knowledge that the best things in life are not those which you can turn into cash at a moment's notice. It is difficult for him, conscious of the pressure of an economic system which is based on a *sauve qui peut* of greed ; but employed or unemployed, it will be to his ultimate advantage to learn how to suspect the merely useful.

Having put a heavy responsibility on poetry at this age, I wish I could meet it with confidence in selecting the type of poem which would be in some way attractive and have an influential connection with the future. It should still be in the main narrative ; with a direct

current of action, and clearly stressed rhythm : romantic in tone, objective in treatment : of events or people, living in a recognisable historical *milieu* : or, since I believe the countryside is still attractive material, of country walks or itineraries : or sports and pastimes. But when it comes to naming specimen poems, the fat is in the fire. ' How they brought the good news to Ghent ' has a marked rhythm, probably attractive but rather too suggestive of a technical trick ; its matter is dramatic and suggests a historical background. But I doubt whether it would leave as influential an impression as ' The Coming of Arthur ', and other ' Idylls of the King ', suitably expurgated. It is, however, a healthier type of the romantic than poems of Hamlet and Hall by the Mortician of Great Dukes and composer of the ' Revenge ' and the ' Charge of the Light Brigade '—both of which on account of their rhythm—Elgar in his most imperial mood,—and their blatant affectation of the shambles, may have a very popular appeal. Most boys have a sneaking eye for the door of a slaughterhouse, and with a touch of the romantic thrown in honour is satisfied. As Tennyson began his ' Idylls ' with a eulogy of Albert the Good, so Scott began his ' Marmion ' with a eulogy of Pitt. Yet it is a poem which, suitably edited, might have interest for the boy through its rhythm, movement and romantic atmosphere ; but again it is merely an introduction to the pomp and circumstance which disguise the petty larcenies of war. It is true that before adolescence the boy is very much a group creature ; in so far as he has ideals, they are social ideals ; and so one may expect that a poem

should convey to him feelings about justice, honour, courage, discipline, truth. Unfortunately, as poems arousing emotional response to these social qualities are usually, if not necessarily, quasi-historical, the qualities are usually perverted in transmission. On the other hand, if these qualities were poetically represented through the struggle between groups of men with Nature and not with other groups or individuals, they would have to have as romantic an atmosphere for the boy as the poems they displaced. Without that atmosphere the boy, while demanding a direct and objective narrative, would not be convinced if he saw, for example, a recognisable image of adults he knew moving to the dictation of a set rhythm—or to put it in another way, too matter-of-fact an interpretation would merely set up a conflict of comparisons between the little he knew from his own experience and the little he could gather from the fictitious experience. It would lack the idealistic certainties on which his emotions can grow.

Such themes as the struggle of a trawler's crew with a storm, the work of miners or furnace-men, the building of a railway viaduct, shepherds in the hills, do not lack romance, and at least they are themes in which social virtues are not piously devoted to destruction. Up to date, such or similar themes have not attracted major poets, which is quite intelligible. The man who can construct hell or command fleets probably does not feel enough scope for his power in a furnace or fo'c'sle : he may make an error in judgment about values, but that is neither here nor there, if nothing less than the apparently immense can move



his imagination. Longfellow's ' Building of the Ship ' is an approach to the type of poem I have in mind ; but it loses itself in sentimentalities. Or if Cowper could have combined his acute observation of the countryside with the narrative power of ' John Gilpin,' one might have had the type of Georgic tale which one wanted. A Georgic alone is not enough for this time of life. Many useful selections might be made, for example, from V. Sackville-West's ' The Land ', but not too many. The boy wants to be striding alongside a particular plough-horse ; or see it shod or help to draw its collar off when it comes in from the fields. A list of veterinary observations on the genus horse would not be the same thing for him, however elegantly made and however apt the passing reflections. He can travel along the Canterbury road because Chaucer was a born story-teller : he can follow Sohrab and Rustum, because Arnold's self-restraint in words allows him to see a marked path even through unfamiliar names and places.

And after all, since, so far as I can see, a plotted series of actions seems essential, and narrative poetry offers a difficult choice—being often either narrative or poetry—why not read drama itself ? It has only one obstacle—it does require a certain standard in reading ; and it has many advantages : provided that it is read as in Caldwell Cook's *Play Way* or with what modifications a teacher finds necessary for his own circumstances. One of these advantages is that it is by nature a social form of expression ; another that even in the cramped space in front of a class-room of desks it combines bodily movement with mental exer-

cise : another, that by its mere physical setting it concentrates attention on the meaning of what is read. An epithet or phrase, for example, may, if a class is reading at the desk, pass as an indiscriminate part of the general mass of sound, unless the class happens to have a very live and imaginative teacher ; but when the same epithet or phrase means a change in physical grouping or in the obvious relations between two visible occupants of the stage, there is less likelihood of its being ignored, although even that is possible without a teacher with imagination. Another advantage is that even the simple material adjuncts, which sometimes help an extempore reading, suggest ways of improving them to boys who are more practical than literary, and the chance of showing what they can do in their own bent may interest them in that for which they are doing it. Still more, in more elaborate representations there is a union of activities which nothing else in a school can give : design, music, carpentry, stage management, economics, besides the give-and-take of a social enterprise and a healthy state of heightened emotion ; and out of this union of activities aesthetic taste has its pickings. I think it would be fair to say that their share in a school production of Shakespeare has often redeemed for the actors much of the mortification they have suffered in reading him and his commentators at the desk. To begin as a stage hand would do no harm to many Shakespearean critics.

Some people object to casting Shakespeare before average boys of fourteen. They would probably agree with T. S. Eliot when he says : ‘ The only pleasure that I got from Shakespeare was the pleasure of being com-

mended for reading him ; had I been a child of more independent mind I should have refused to read him at all '. But he would have, I gather, been quite ready to act him, for he also says : ' The most useful poetry, socially, would be one which could cut across all the present stratifications of public taste—stratifications which are perhaps a sign of social disintegration. The ideal medium for poetry, to my mind, and the most direct means of social " usefulness " for poetry, is the theatre. In a play of Shakespeare you get several levels of significance. For the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more thoughtful the character and conflict of character, for the more literary the words and phrasing, for the more musically sensitive the rhythm, and for auditors of greater sensitiveness and understanding a meaning which reveals itself gradually. And I do not believe that the classification of audience is so clear-cut as this ; but rather that the sensitiveness of every auditor is acted upon by all these elements at once, though in different degrees of consciousness. At none of these levels is the auditor bothered by the presence of that which he does not understand or by the presence of that in which he is not interested.'

To say that there was no level at which the boy of fourteen could understand or be interested in Shakespeare would be to deny that a boy has any care for drama in the raw. One might as well say that he sees an ambulance stop at a neighbour's door and walks the other way. A death warning, a conspirator's meeting in the early hours of a very stormy night, a murder, a man in danger of being lynched and final vengeance to the sound of trumpets and with a ghost for announcer.

There seems to be a level here on which the youthful film fan would find himself at home. Unlike the film, this crude framework also carries a cargo of ideas from a heroic kind of society ; the kind of society in which the boy himself would find as acceptable an environment as in that which the local adults provide. A cargo, by the way, of intriguing verbal appearance : words from which and turns of phrase some boys will pick up with as much pleasure—occasionally with as much awe—as a handsome and unfamiliar postage stamp.

There are other dramatists than Shakespeare who can provide material for play-reading ; but except for the interest of variety to the teacher, I do not see any valid reason for replacing best by second-best. The best will probably suffer least for the future ; and in this best, as it happens, there is plenty of second-best for those who want it. Personally I feel also that there is a good deal of the schoolboy in Shakespeare, and in other Elizabethans as well ; in many ways they seem to be verging on adolescence, at least, as we think of adolescence. According to some, it was a post-war generation of disillusionment. The theory gives to those absorbed in the present convenient opportunities of tracing ingenious analogies. But at least as far as this mentality is represented on the stage, psychological introspection for one sex had to be conveyed by the mouths of schoolboys : and though choir-boys may give a passable imitation of angels in biblical language, I suspect their power of conveying a dramatised version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* or *The Lighthouse*. As T. S. Eliot says, ' In a play of Shakespeare you get

several levels of significance': some so deep they take a lifetime of experience to read—and doubtless, in shaping a *Rosalind* or a *Lady Macbeth*, Shakespeare may have had in mind their interpretation by a woman, and chose his words, so that while the subtle maturities of truth should be suggested by the uncomprehending enunciations of a boy, yet the boy should have the confidence of understanding a certain sense in what he said. The poet was respecting the dramatist's discipline. Further, what was expressed thus of one sex set a condition on what could be expressed rather than suggested by the other. Speeches in the same scene could not follow different formal standards. So, because an experienced eye may find underlying the rhetoric of *Macbeth* acute intellectual analysis of human motives, it would not be safe to assume that a boy who is incapable of such analysis is also incapable of being impressed by the play. In the rhetoric itself, owing to the conditions of the Elizabethan stage, is an emotional approach to understanding not far removed from the boy's experience. And I suspect that much of the understanding of a Shakespearean play seen, before being read, if that were possible, by the intellectual eye itself would come from the same rhetorical level.

I have said that there is something of the schoolboy about Shakespeare. I have in mind his playing with words, brilliant at times, at other times crude, but the kind of thing the well-grown-up man does not do: also his curious mixture of narrow loyalties and a breadth of view which sees beyond caste, class or other conventional accessories: his hearty enjoyment

of the material, his blend of superstition and devoutness : his freedom from the sentimental, his companionableness. These few statements are not meant to be a compendium of the qualities either of Shakespeare or boy ; only to suggest for debate that there are points in common between them.

After fourteen adolescence, sometimes before ; but these ages can only be approximate. Adolescence of fourteen to sixteen is an awkward age to provide with a nucleus for class reading. The boy is becoming conscious of a self. Sometimes almost to jealousy ; a self disturbing in its emotional power and demanding for its existence its own judgments, or unfortunately what it takes with a little flattery to be its own judgments. At sixteen Romes are being built every day by the more energetic, pulled down every other day and defiantly rebuilt, each boy his own architect and using a varied assortment of material. Responsibility for the plan of the city is the boy's, or should be—I am afraid it is often, mostly should be. The part of the teacher should be that of consultant on technical difficulties. Consultation will undoubtedly lead him to a share in creating the general plan ; and in the solution of common difficulties of technique boys in class will gain insight into each other's ideas—and life will give them few such favourable opportunities again for co-operative knowledge.

If this slight diagnosis is correct, it would seem that whatever attraction to literature boys of this age may have in common will depend very much on its power to give them technical skill in defining and expressing their ideas. As with a motor cycle, they will

with words first aim at riding them, and unsevering and reassembling them—that is, if they have any interest in them at all. For which reason the composition lessons would probably be the most suitable time for acquainting them with what is known as literature, as giving models and material for the practice of technique, and mostly in prose form or verse which has a prose character.

As this is an age at which physical change intensifies emotional activity, one might expect that the emotive use of language would have a greater appeal. To the individual probably it has ; but as it now conveys ideas that have a more intimately realised personal relation, it is for private rather than for public reading, unless in public attention is fixed directly on the form and only indirectly on the substance. This may again be considered too dogmatic an assertion ; it certainly has the weakness of all generalisations about the human being : it refers to the nebulous typical ; and also it is based on experience with boys who before fourteen had had a rather commonplace, vague and unimaginative contact with poetry. But the fact remains that the early adolescent, whether he is dull and materialistic or idealistic and intelligent, tends to treat poetry, when in company with his fellows, with something very near a passing contempt, and much may be lost thereby. The danger is less, of course, the more impersonal in theme and treatment the poem. Nature and open-air poems usually seem to maintain interest, if the style is objective or in a classical mode. The reticence of that which is catholic is agreeable to self-conscious ears ; and the fact that it is sometimes effected by an arti-

ficial convention of words does not seem to detract from its charm. The pastoral elegy such as ' Lycidas ' even with its peculiarities, the descriptive ode such as Keats' ' To Autumn ' (in contrast with his ' Eve of St. Agnes '), are more likely not to be damned in the eyes of fifteen plus than some modern hark-away tally-ho narratives ; as the realism of the modern often means the intrusion of the self-conscious in a pseudo-naïve way, which the young critic laughs at and is the worse for it.

Undoubtedly much depends on the capacity of the teacher to produce the atmosphere needed for appreciative reading (*vide* p. 117 on ' Lycidas '); but such capacity granted, I would risk saying that he will find its use most effective in verse of the prose period from Dryden to Cowper. The formality of the heroic couplet, for example, with its skill in fitting the construction to the rhyme, its obvious skill, its unblushing artifice in the manipulation of ideas, and more than that, its description of everyday phenomena in a Sunday-best vocabulary, are things which interest the tyro. Also in public he is more at ease with a nymph than a girl,—but this may be merely a result of monastic education. One may object that he is being submitted to a jargon : but, at any rate, it is a jargon based on dexterity and a respect for ordered thought, and incidentally in such works as ' The Rape of the Lock ' and ' Windsor Forest ' it achieves great descriptive power. And however individualistic the tastes of the adolescent may be, unless he follows some law in expressing himself, he is confronted with chaos and is helpless. He can, if he has anything in him, transmute



the formal, as he wishes later ; but its precision and coherence are useful at a time when he needs these qualities for other work, and to gain a respect for order through a respect for artistic form is less likely to damage independence of spirit than many of the other efforts which the school makes to produce it.

Perhaps in emphasising the use of eighteenth-century verse I have been consulting too narrow a taste ; thinking too much of boys who have taken classics at school. To some such poetry may seem nothing but a severe medicine. Certainly, if a boy had had before fourteen a very thin poetic diet, and if after fourteen the individual were not making poetic meals of his own, it might be hard fare. But I do not propose it under those conditions. For the boy who is not studying the classics, though he may be taking Latin for the School Certificate, I feel that at this age English should provide him with a verbal discipline, if it is to be a successful course. This will be done mainly through composition ; but what is read in class should give that mental exercise which the classical scholar gets in translation. Such exercise may be got, of course, from a variety of sources, from Lyly to Joyce. But I would distinguish here between two methods of appreciation ; one through detailed analysis combined with written composition, the other through impressions gained both consciously and subconsciously through eye and ear of a continuance of subject matter. And it is this I have in mind here. From whatever period the subject matter is chosen, I feel that its emotional power should be socially conditioned and what may be called the artificial elements in expression be much in evidence.

This would, for example, include Spenser's 'Faerie Queen' and exclude Keats' 'Hyperion'.

The reading of drama is usually continued at this age for examination purposes. It may be continued for other reasons. The drama is socially conditioned and as long as it was a serious method of interpreting experience sustained a formal discipline also. One may experiment in choice of playwright; the choice of play will be restricted by the type of subject matter. Congreve's *Way of the World* in form of expression and as a social interpretation is a better play than Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. But it may require too mature an experience to be justly appreciated at sixteen. For the same reason Sheridan's *Rivals* comes in where Gay's *Beggar's Opera* goes out. But when I referred to a play being socially conditioned, I did not mean that it should be a piece of social realism. The motives and actions of human characters living in a society romantically selected out of actual social conditions are a subject which may have a more valuable effect on the growing mind than the more limited characters of a realistic world. To develop judgments on a basis of what human nature is *in posse*, is a sound antidote to a premature prejudice of what it is in *esse*. And Shakespeare again suggests himself. But he might with an exceptional class be compared with one or two of his contemporaries, or with such a play as Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vincit*, unfortunately in translation. In any case, before any such comparison and attempt to evaluate subject matter must come attention to what is actually in any chosen play of his. At this age especially one needs to beware of borrowed judgments

that are a substitute for a knowledge of what the judgment is made upon. Even the poet in Shakespeare must be approached first from the dramatic conditions his poetry serves. One frequently sees criticisms of his lines quoted independently of their context. A speech of Hamlet, for example, may be evaluated according to the latest psychological research into behaviour. But that matters little until we have fixed its context with the particular moment in the general course of the action and with the intended effect on the spectator or on those who are engaged in the action with him. If the technique of the play is intelligently studied, the significance of the subject matter will be discovered by the boys in the manner best suited to each individually and to the suggestive power of the teacher.

After sixteen or thereabouts comes the age of specialisation. The value of its being introduced at that age seems to be in many ways questionable. The present results of spending the two remaining school years in a specialised type of subject are not such as to justify the neglect of a more general culture ; and until the sixth forms of schools cease to be the forcing-houses of narrow ambitions in this, that, or the other subject, it is rather a waste of time to commend any particular English course for non-English specialists. It would be another matter if in mathematics or the natural sciences a boy learned something of the history of his subject and the interaction between mathematics or scientific ideas and changes in human society. The young scholar would not suffer in mental balance if he had some real understanding of the efforts of the alchemist or of the great faith in mathematics which

eventually led to d'Alembert and the Encyclopedia and by devious ways to the French Revolution. One cannot begin too early absorbing the axiom that the whole is greater than the part, the mind than the intellect. But, it may be said, what has this to do with English? Simply that the broadening of outlook would bring with it a taste for literature as something intrinsic in scientific equipment. English literature again could well engage much of the reading of the history specialist. At sixteen he is just approaching the age when history has the beginnings of any real meaning for him; and in the next two years the extent of such meaning will depend very much on the extent to which he can understand the way in which a human being thinks; and in my own opinion this understanding will be greater if he trains his capacity for research by studying the analysis of human conduct made by creative thinkers rather than the compilations whose first care is the maintenance of a particular historical tradition and second the demands of human reality.

Until such or similar changes in the curriculum take place, one cannot do more—so far as reading is concerned—than suggest for the non-English specialists as a possibility, that some period be set aside each week for the reading of what might be called a nucleus book. Such a book I would call Brown's *Religio Medici*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, a volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* or *A Joy for Ever* or a translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* or a modern book on literary or aesthetic criticism, if it is tolerable prose; some book, in fact—and many will doubtless suggest themselves to individual tastes—containing a theory to be investigated

and in the investigation shared by a thoughtful and imaginative teacher introducing the reader to a wide circle of books.

If one engages in even simple comparative work between fourteen and sixteen, as comparing the structure of two plays or the treatment of a theme by two different authors, it is likely that the boy after sixteen will wish to increase his powers of comparative criticism. But if he has an examination at eighteen, in which he is expected to display a knowledge of literature out of all proportion to his experience, he is compelled to rely on superficial reading and judgments taken out of standard summaries. This system seems needlessly to interrupt a period in which a claim for continuity might be made on the score of mental development. There seems to be a greater metamorphosis in the mind after twenty or twenty-one than after eighteen. In the average man of to-day one does not expect mature work before twenty-one ; and about that time very often the world, which he has built up as a faithful replica of the world of experience, vanishes in a disconcerting way, and for the first time he sets about in grim earnest examining the true foundations on which the structure of his life is to rest. He might do this more successfully if there were a more coherent preparation between the years seventeen and twenty-one. An ill-digested surfeit of books between sixteen and eighteen, and then between eighteen and twenty-one the addition of a philosophic method of knowledge to the flimsy second-hand judgments already acquired, can scarcely make for a sound mental constitution.

To suggest continuity between seventeen and

twenty-one may raise the objection that the functions of school and university are being confused. But there is no necessary confusion. At school one has not time to verify in any sufficient detail the ultimate value of the processes of comparative judgment one adopts. It is enough to form from limited data a method of assembling and discriminating between ideas, that is worth putting to a more exacting proof later—whether the later refers to a university or to leisure intervals in the earning of a livelihood.

Whatever views are held of the type of work to be done by the English specialist at school, when one considers the vast content of English literature alone, even since Chaucer, it is clear that some canon of selection is required. One can go by time and periods, a somewhat ironic process with 'immortals', were it not that their immortality is a thing for the boy to prove for himself. By the time he is sixteen, he should have some inkling of the pedigree of some writers ; he will doubtless discover more in the next two years, but it may be wiser that he should do it incidentally. Literary history, when it becomes a convenient system, is dangerous. There is also danger in using literature to teach movements and the like generalisations. Something akin to the nucleus book suggested above might give judicious co-ordination for independent reading and favour the growth of critical discrimination and the power to discover principles underlying particular instances. Such central themes would be the focus for oral discussion, skeleton and full-dress essays and their criticism in class.

I suggest the following as a focal scheme for these two

years. It is quite conjectural, as I have had no means of testing it by experiment ; but it might provoke opposition in the minds of those responsible for senior work, and opposition is sometimes an aid to thought.

Briefly, the scheme would be the conscious realisation of what, under my initial aim, had been practised all through the English Course, and was still being practised by the senior forms in their composition work. So it would be in a certain sense revisory. It would also be a continued training in how to read, as understood by a Gibbon or a Strafford. ' After glancing my eye ', says Gibbon, ' over the design and order of a new book I suspended the perusal until I had finished the task of self-examination ; till I had revolved in a solitary walk all that I knew or believed or had thought on the subject of the whole work or of some particular chapter. I was then qualified to discern how much the author added to my original stock and I was sometimes satisfied by the agreement, sometimes armed by the opposition of our ideas.' The boy, of course, extends his reading for himself according to his individual tastes ; it is for the school to ' arm ' him with ' an original ', or rather nuclear ' stock ',—it may be small in quantity, but it will be known so well that he has a defence against weakly accepting extraneous views at their face value, because he will have something by which to test such views, something which he has forged thoroughly to his own understanding.

The scheme, then, would begin by examining as simply as possible the ideas underlying what has been done in the course. There has been communication—a technical process combined with an exploring of

values. A definition of the process should be attempted; and of the most important terms that occur in it. The What and How communicated will clearly involve such terms as the senses, emotions, intellect, feeling and thought, and some knowledge of the working of the mind. For example, suppose a boy is considering what a mathematician is doing mentally when he is engaged on a problem. He may see that the mathematician, in following an argument each step of which is intellectually related to the others, may be also working with a good deal of excitement; that he may make jumps, as it were, beyond the logical limits he obeys intellectually. What he jumps to may be partly something he remembers; but what makes him choose one particular pattern out of his memories? How far is this choice affected by his emotions? This may be too ambitious an example: the simpler examples can be, the better, and the more a boy can examine his own experiences, the simpler. But I use it to suggest that at this stage some psychological definitions should be attempted. They can only be sketches for later developments, and they will serve their purpose if they help a boy to realise that when he is speaking of feelings, for example, he is not speaking of the senses. He may not be able to give definitions that are exact by an adult standard, but he can aim at exactness according to the standard of his attainment; and in so doing, realise that much depends on clear distinctions. He is bound to be using psychological terms in his work: it will be a natural consequence of an intelligent study of syntax. And instead of using them always incidentally and therefore vaguely, he would be helped



by having to stop and take stock of them. I think it can be done without making literature a serf to psychology.

The boy in expressing himself is also exploring values. If he has any intelligence, he wants to know when and why he expresses himself well. He will compare himself with others and among those others are the so-called classics. But communications are of such manifold diversity that comparison will be vague, unless he can begin by collecting for comparison what is homogeneous. He must classify. He may attempt classification by content or subject matter. But when he finds that a business letter, a sermon, a psychological treatise, a melodrama and a lyric may all have as their subject the same emotion, he may find that content in itself is no basis for classification; that the discriminating factor is the treatment of the content. He may then try purpose and method contingent on purpose as a way of distinguishing one type of writing from another. There would be little virtue except for the weak boy in this work of classification if he simply went to a textbook and read some rules and examples and then looked for others. To be a living thing, it must begin with a variety of material and a desire to sort it out into some kind of order which is logically as sound as the boy can make it.

Suppose, then, that he examines examples of a business letter, a political speech, a sermon, an advertisement, a mathematical proof, a scientific exposition, a lyric, an essay, a comedy and so on—and in what follows I give what I feel to be a probable line of procedure, but naturally it is only illustrative in detail.

He examines these communications to see whether he can classify them according to their purpose. He will probably find that they are mostly communications either for an immediately useful or a not immediately useful end : he will also find that it is difficult to assign some to either of these alternatives. He may find that he has on his hands a constantly increasing mixed residue : and he will have to review his idea of what he considers useful and what not. His final classification may be somewhat as follows :

Under communications made for some immediately useful purpose, he puts

The business letter,  
The political speech,  
The advertisement,  
The sermon.

He may further define their purpose as being to promote action of some kind, and the means they use to achieve this as the inducing through words of an attitude of mind, the impact of will on will ; and in reflecting on the idea of will he may realise how much the language must have an emotional bearing. If he is satisfied that he has a coherent group, he can then examine what qualities should be regarded as valuable in this type of communication.

Under communications made partly for a useful and partly for a non-useful purpose he puts

The Mathematical proof,  
The Scientific exposition.

His decision may be guided by the particular instances

of this type which he has collected. Their purpose he may further define as being to promote abstract knowledge, and the means to this end, as being completely or dominantly intellectual. He may find it difficult to rule the imaginative use of language out of this group ; he may suspect metaphor ; but in so far as the group is to be considered as synonymous with the scientific, he will have a fairly clear idea of what qualities give this kind of communication its value. And while he appreciates that value, he may also, in considering these communications, become aware of their limitation or limiting effect on the nature of language and, with it, of thought.

Under communications for not immediately or non-useful purpose he puts

The lyric,  
The drama.

The idea that anyone should express himself for some purpose which has no immediate use is one which is likely to puzzle a good many boys ; especially as it is a habit characteristic of madmen. But in deciding on use, as an element in purpose,—they will have already met this disquieting alternative of the non-useful. They may have sounded the teacher on what they discover through him can be called metaphysical problems in connection with it. But they will probably feel that, if it could be explained in some further way, it would be less unsatisfactory. To call the non-useful disinterested or artistic, though it might meet with logical approval, would probably not remove an uneasy feeling that it was rather a poor and nebulous title

for a group. To say that the aim of such writing is to record the truth might seem more sustaining, as it has a flavour of the moral about it, and the moral savours of something practical. But the truth in this connection will need careful treatment. An artist seeks to express something which he in feeling and thought, by imagination and reason, apprehends as a part of reality. It may be a fly, it may be the melancholy of human affairs, both in a particular relation to himself through experience. What he apprehends is, for him, the truth, in the sense used here. His expression is also usually communication: he seeks to make someone else or himself consciously realise what he has apprehended. Again, what he apprehends is not merely an intellectual abstraction. It is a particular thing experienced by his whole being: and in order that any particular thing may be consciously realised it must have a certain formal context; and what this context is to be will depend on a personal selection. The content of what is expressed will be affected by the choice of the individual artist. This relation between the artist and what he expresses is one part of what we call his style. Further, if what he expresses is to live for others, if others are to apprehend exactly what he has apprehended, his imaginative thought, of whatever emotional intensity, must observe some forms of expression common to himself and others. Otherwise communication ceases—so far as conscious judgment of the process is concerned. But though he observes common forms, again he will vary them according to his individual predilection. The relation between the artist and the manner in which he expresses the content

of his experience is the other part of what we call style. For successful communication there must be harmony between these two parts of style. Content and form must fit one another. By what standard one is to decide what is harmony in style and what not is a problem that is likely to outlast the world. This is all to the good for the school ; for, though a man has to take the plunge sometimes and make an irrational decision on this point, he should, as a boy, realise that the problem of values is not easy of solution.

So from classification we have reached a stage at which an enquiry into what is artistically valuable can be made, and the material for the enquiry may be taken from certain forms of communication which have been regarded as suitable for certain types of material, and this accepted tradition be critically considered.

Before outlining how this may be done, I wish to go back for a moment to what I have just said concerning truth, artistic expression and style. I have only there suggested the kind of thought process which might be initiated ; I have omitted any specific method of procedure. This would have to be worked out with a simplicity of detail and close contact with ' concrete ' example which would require a book in itself ; and I feel that a simple aesthetic treatise would be indispensable to English work at this stage : as direct as Aristotle's *Poetics* and dealing with such questions as are raised in Middleton Murry's *Problems of Style*.

To continue—in this communal search for values, which is not a substitute for individual adventure, after a provisional classification of various modes of

communication, such as tragedy, comedy, the lyric, the novel and so on, I should be inclined to take tragedy as the first to be examined: as the mode in which individual taste has for many reasons to comply most with certain formal conditions; and so one might hope to reach some common standard of what is artistically valuable sooner in this form of communication than in many others. Undoubtedly any approach to such a standard will rest more on conscious intellectual approval than on subconscious affective conviction. This may give too much power to a clever and ambitious teacher; for the class, which believe in him, will assume that lack of emotional reaction in themselves is not a fault in communication, but a defect in reception. On the other hand, the fact that they are concerned in a common enquiry in which nothing, if the work is honestly done, is prejudged, should, if they are interested at all, give them a sense of critical responsibility. And I may repeat that the chief aim of the process is to learn how to become acquainted with an author, how to read and how to prepare oneself to find values in reality, as it is experienced by oneself and others.

Some definition of tragedy may have been made in recognising it as a distinct type of expression. And further enquiry may start from that point. In any case, I feel that it will have most life if it begins by taking what the boys regard as a tragedy within their experience, actual or imagined, of everyday circumstances; and if they provide sketches of such material, from examining these they may evolve a gradually clearer conception of what material they would call tragic in character and what not, or what

more and what less. They would probably soon discover that material could not be judged apart from its treatment ; and as the traditional way of communicating such material has been by impersonation, its treatment is subject to strict conditions. Whether the traditional way is sound or not may be considered. It is a question of the stage or the printed page being the better means of communicating matter of great emotional as well as intellectual intensity, in which the actions of human beings are represented. The mind conceiving *Paradise Lost* may have been as emotionally intense as that conceiving *King Lear*. But is that intensity conveyed as successfully ? Supposing that stage impersonation is accepted as the mode of conveyance suitable to tragedy, its conditions may be explored, and here such works as Aristotle's *Poetics* or Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poetry* may be useful as containing ideas to approve or condemn ; and it is obvious also that some account of the main changes in theatrical representation will be needed to serve as a check in estimating the aesthetic value of specific tragedies. Linked with these actual stage conditions, one meets such questions as the suitability of plot and character ; and with these, the question of the unities, and of diction ; and all discussion of these points must have reference to their connection with the actual performance, if possible, of some particular play. Otherwise discussion will become a mere parade of second-hand words. Unfortunately one cannot often see on the stage a tragedy of note : and as a substitute, one will have probably to be content with play-reading, that is, reading aloud by the boys as a dramatic group

in as imaginative, an atmosphere as possible. Such reading will be preceded and followed by individual reading ; and I would suggest that it include about half a dozen plays, such as *Hamlet*, *Samson Agonistes*, *All for Love*, *Prometheus Unbound* ; and a Sophocles, the *Antigone*, and a Racine, *Phèdre*, if translations of these are available : if the command of French is good enough to read the original, so much the better. Possibly also by way of contrast, Lillo's *London Merchant* might be read, and by way of satirical protest, Fielding's *Tom Thumb*. By a careful study of these plays, or better a jealous study, as though the boy were intending to create a tragedy for himself, he should be able to collect resemblances and differences. From the resemblances the class should be able to draw up a prospectus, as it were, of the essential conditions needed for the communication of a theme, such that it may be defined as a tragedy ; and from the differences it may see how far it can agree concerning any author, that he has justified his variation of a standard form by the interpretation of reality which he has thus been able to make. As judgments should be the result of individual reactions to any particular play, reactions involving the whole individual, even approximate agreements may be difficult, especially as they mean a curtailment of personal independence ; but even a sincere agreement to differ will be valuable, as in reaching it much critical exercise will have been undergone, and, one hopes, enjoyed. And it is most important that what may always be a failure to agree on values should be attempted with all zest ; for without it an undue attention to dramatic form would obscure the



fact that it is only a means to an end ; and the individual might actually be alienated from contact with what is of most consequence to him—the dramatist-poet's ' conception of ultimates '. Though in analysis comparisons between one dramatist and another are inevitable—in fact, without them one could not establish differences—in estimating the value of these differences I would suggest the taking of any one dramatist by himself and apart from others, on the ground that it is what the dramatist thought and felt and what the boy thinks and feels concerning the same things that are the first subject for comparison. Also, I have not suggested the reading of any modern play. This is not intended to exclude references to modern plays. The work of criticism would be dead without them ; but though as much incidental reference as possible to them should be made, to use them as a basis for criteria might be rather like trying to lay the foundations of a house with gunpowder.

Comedy would naturally seem to be the next subject for a similar investigation ; but I think it would be found that at least concurrently with it one would have to investigate the nature of poetry. The merits of verse and prose as media for tragedy will have been already considered ; but of necessity, with a limited treatment, and one which could only be regarded as an anticipation of a fuller treatment, as soon as the chance occurred. The distinction between verse and prose will probably turn on a study of rhythm ; but, before one has come to the deeper causes which differentiate rhythm, one will already have met trouble in making distinctions of a more superficial kind. The

Letter of Burke to the Duke of Bedford is prose ; Walt Whitman's 'A Song for Occupations' or T. S. Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi' are verse : but on any metrical reckoning it would not be easy to say why one was to be called prose and the other verse. To substitute for prose some other word such as non-verse, though it would not make classification easier, might be convenient for other reasons. As it is, poetry may be written in prose, prose may be written in verse, but verse cannot be written in prose. This dual meaning of prose is confusing : and since the real contrast is between prose and poetry, the term prose might be reserved for that context.

A distinction between verse and non-verse may break down on the question of rhythm, and in any case will not take one far to a distinction between poetry and prose ; but it may be a useful introduction, and an enquiry into varieties of rhythm may be a good way of exploring those other qualities found with certain rhythms and not with others, which belong to poetry and not to prose ; emotional intensity, for example, intuitional processes of thought, transpositions or metaphors from one plane of reality to another, as it were, made by the imaginative power, which becomes active in certain emotional states, certain attitudes of communication, which may be natural, for example, in a person singing but not in one speaking. Some of these things may sound likely to confuse or bore even a senior boy ; but in practice they would be met in a definite and particular shape—in examples of poetry and prose expressing similar subject matter—and consequently recognised under simpler terms. Narrative,

speculative, ceremonial, didactic poems could be contrasted with prose of the same type : and finally one would come to the lyric, or rather lyric poetry ; and here one would have not only a very sensitive criterion of what is poetic and what not, but also a type of communication which would bring into acute revision the whole question of relative and absolute standards of value in reference to both form and matter. Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* might make a nucleus work for this enquiry : also selections from the letters of Keats.

There is one other topic which must find a place in a critical review of modes of communication, and that is, fiction ; and since fiction is the most practised literary art of the day, it will be useful to examine what formal conditions are necessary to its being an art. One might begin by comparing a novel and a play on the same subject, to see by contrast what general differentiation of treatment is necessary for a novel, or one might take a chapter out of a textbook on psychology and see what minimum alteration would be required to turn it into a short story. Supposing that thus some simple conditions could be abstracted, they would be soon put to a severe test when they were applied to existing novels, and when they had survived this application it would still be difficult to use them as a means to arrive at the relative artistic value of a novel. But it is not enough to leave appreciation to emotional responses. Appreciation would then become eventually merely another name for a temporary satisfaction, a diversion. On the other hand, it is true that a critical diagnosis of the form of a novel may not

directly affect one's response to the novelist's interpretation of experience. To know that Joyce's *Ulysses* is sustained by a pattern of action borrowed from an epic may seem a matter of indifference to one who is responding emotionally to Mrs Bloom. But the epic pattern is to some the *sine qua non* of any response at all to the work. To consider whether adherence to the discipline of the objective is essential to the art of the novel may not seem more than an academic exercise, a thing of little reference to life. But problems of formal value are a centre at which novels from a very wide circumference can meet. In some segment of the conflict between classic and romantic one can gather such different works as *Tristram Shandy*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Rouge et Noir*, *War and Peace*, *Madame Bovary*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Crotchet Castle*, *Tom Jones*, *The Egoist*, *Vanity Fair*. And the fact that they are approached in such an atmosphere, very much intellectual perhaps, may be the cause either of their being read at all, or of their being read a second time and more often, as the years pass, with increasing enjoyment. A boy may privately fall head-over-heels in love with the heroine of a novel. And this emotional reaction may be for a time a stimulus to mental activity ; but if she is so attractive, she will stand being met in public under the discrete concealment of a study in artistic form ; and if she emerges successfully from that test she will be the source of more substantial pleasure and more permanent mental stimulus than she was before. Further, a boy may feel privately that a novel has revealed a profound and illuminating mind, with whom he is *en rapport* ; then it should be either an attraction to

review how that mind has constructed this influential effect or a corrective to find that the profundity and illumination did not extend so far as to produce as artistic a work as they might have done. In brief, this group treatment of the novel may add to the pleasure of reading in private : and no less, to its intelligence. It may reach little certainty in artistic valuation : there is value in that itself. It will give a certainty, which is important at this stage of the critic's development ; the certainty of knowing what is actually in a novel. ' The author of the book ', says Mr Lubbock in his *Craft of Fiction*, ' was a craftsman ; the critic must overtake him at his work and see how the book was made '.

In giving this sketch of a possible course for the last two years' reading in school, I have had to treat classification as if it were possible to make it clear-cut without divorcing it from actual human experience ; and I have had to trespass a little on method, but at the same time for the sake of brevity to condense the suggestions made, and, as a result, use general terms which in the absence of particularised illustrations may give the impression that the course would be too difficult even for senior boys and throw them into the danger of mistaking words for realities. That will depend on the extent to which the teacher is prepared to base his judgments and his methods on a live and adventurous contact with the printed page and the minds behind it ; and on the extent to which he has the outlook certainly of a craftsman and possibly of an artist.

As a provisional distribution of time to different topics in the two years I would tentatively suggest :

1st Term :

Definition of process of communication with simple psychological reference.

Classification of types of communication.

Examination of ' useful ' prose.

2nd Term :

Consideration of non-useful communications and mixed types.

Preliminary discrimination between verse and non-verse.

Classification of types of poetry.

Study of Tragedy.

3rd Term :

Study of Tragedy (completed).

Comedy.

4th Term :

The Nature of Poetry.

Lyric Poetry.

5th Term :

Fiction.

6th Term :

Revision : principles of criticism with more advanced psychological and aesthetic reference.

## METHOD

### ARRANGEMENT OF LESSONS

LESSONS should be points in a coherent plan ; have from one to another continuity of interest and intention ; be, as it were, wheels within wheels, cyclic. Few would disagree with this pious sentiment ; but many leave matters too much to the clock and the page number of a book.

An experienced teacher, and intelligent, may seem to work without a plan, responding to the chief need of the moment and moving easily from one emergency to another. But one cannot move with ease and certainty among an apparently haphazard sequence of ideas unless one has the security of an invisible programme. One may adapt it continually to this or that psychological emergency ; but without a pattern to adapt, one would be soon stumbling and always dull.

Successful patterns do not rise out of the subconscious without being put there sometimes by no little effort. Conscious planning may have for a while clumsy results ; the premeditated scheme and spontaneous thought tread on each other's feet ; but spontaneous thought without a scheme can be exceedingly boring, and a waste of energy.

Perhaps for the prospective teacher the most effective way of cultivating spontaneity would be, after deciding

on his aim, to think out and draft on paper a scheme first of the methods he considered most likely to secure the aim with boys of a given age, and then to work out general lines and details of method relative to a series of lessons ; and after he had satisfied himself that his pattern of procedure was severely sharp in detail—for in practice the clear-cut soon loses its edge—then he should put the scheme on one side, if necessary, tear it up and trust to the occasion and its demand on his resourcefulness.

As a rough sketch of the type of scheme I mean, I offer the following—greater detail would be needed for a full outline—but I omit such detail here, as I shall be dealing with it later. The rough scheme has in view the age eleven to twelve.

Three types of lessons:

- A. Reading.
- B. Composition.
- C. Grammar, etc.

A. Reading aloud :

- (1) Longer pieces—if possible, complete wholes.

Chief purpose—grasp of wholes, continuity (power to retain a continuous series of ideas in the mind needs practice).

Attention also to structure, to help in intelligent grasp of subject matter.

Subject matter (poems)—read aloud, well read, by teacher or good reader—no practice in reading.



Practice in reading and subconscious assimilation cannot go together.

Short stories, dialogues, plays.

- (2) Short pieces—possibly practice in reading for the better readers.

Purpose—detailed and critical study : pieces being short, no strain on grasp of whole, so attention can be given to detail.

Subject matter (poems)—prose extracts only to illustrate special points ?

Corresponding to A (1) and (2), B (1) and (2). All will probably merge. A (2) and B (2) certainly.

## B. Composition :

- (1) Chiefly oral—

- (a) To sustain continuity of ideas—question and answer, speeches, story-telling, recitation. Type of work to vary as capacity to sustain a sequence of ideas increases.

Attention to structure and ordering of subject matter.

- (b) To make for versatility of mental focus.

Condensation—*e.g.* précis.

Enlargement—*e.g.* expansion of a given précis for some given purpose.

The B.B. or paper to assist under (b)—to record the results of oral effort.

- (2) Chiefly written—

Purpose—to practise simple forms of expression in detail.

Method—short pieces of descriptive or narrative writing, anything from one to half a dozen sentences, verse or non-verse, according to need ; probably the fewer at a time, the better.

To be done in close conjunction with A (2).

Opportunity to concentrate on

- (a) Economy of words—*i.e.* value of single words in their context.
- (b) Exactness of words to convey observation and attitude.
- (c) Trying out simple sentences to get the best order and emphasis.
- (d) Arranging material to get the best connection between two or three simple sentences.

[Material can be given to remove strain of invention.]

### C. Miscellaneous :

- (1) Grammar : Is a systematic course required at this age ? If so, should it be more than classification of main terms of syntax ?
- (2) Dictionary practice : Should boys of this age have practice in finding their way easily from page to page ?
- (3) Speech exercise : Special lessons based on phonetics and reading devoted entirely to speech drill.
- (4) Spelling drill, if necessary.

Having made a rough sketch, outlining the main

types of work he thinks most useful, the teacher might then try making combinations among them, covering a given period at the rate of four lessons a week. He might thereby get some clue to a justly proportioned expenditure of time.

As examples of what I mean by continuity of lessons, I give the following dealing with the ballad :

(1) *Horatius*

1st Lesson :

Reading by teacher—for a good reading there would have to be excisions in the poem—followed by silent reading at home ; with special attention to the first half of the poem with a view to the next lesson.

2nd Lesson :

Oral dramatisation—a meeting of the Fathers, at which a Scout describes the approach of the Volsci : discussion of defence measures—the volunteering of Horatius, Herminius, Lartius.

3rd Lesson :

The same—with revisions made from the try-out in the second lesson, followed by the reading at home of the fight at the bridge.

4th Lesson :

Description of the falling of the bridge in 3 or 4 sentences (on paper) discussed, and a fair copy made.

5th Lesson :

Oral account of the fight at the bridge—

(a) Given by a Roman boy who saw it to a Roman boy who didn't.

(b) Given by an Etruscan messenger to the people of Clusium.

6th Lesson :

Oral discussion—how to commemorate Horatius' feat.

Speeches.

7th Lesson :

Suggestions in writing for lettering on a memorial stone.

8th Lesson :

Second reading by teacher.

## (2) *A Robin Hood Ballad*

1st Lesson :

The reading by teacher of 'Robin Hood and the Widow's Sons.'

2nd Lesson :

The same with a refrain.

3rd Lesson :

Communal invention of a similar theme—the capture and rescue of Robin Hood himself.

4th Lesson :

Narrative restatement of this theme with discussion of rescue details.

5th Lesson :

Composition of a letter to be sent by arrow summoning Friar Tuck to be Robin Hood's Confessor.

6th Lesson :

Dramatisation—a dialogue between Robin Hood and the Friar in the presence of the gaoler.

## 7th Lesson :

Construction of an imaginary map illustrating the rescue.

## 8th Lesson :

Composition of an official account of rescue by sheriff.

## 9th and 10th Lessons :

Construction of a ballad on these events ; the class divided into three or four groups, each taking one part of the story, *or*

Reading of another ballad, somewhat similar in theme, *e.g.* ' Robin and the Monk '.

These programmes have not been taken from practice ; on the contrary, they are intended to represent an attempt by the teacher to see his work as a continuous whole before he tries it out in practice with a class. In any preconceived scheme many and drastic modifications may be found necessary, as it is enlarged under actual circumstance, but that does not detract from the value of preconception. I have submitted two schemes here, as two possible ways of linking up reading and composition, the A and B lessons referred to above, in accordance with my original aim :—one point in which was to introduce boys to others' ideas through an interest in their own activities, to use that interest as a bridge. But other aims, other variations of procedure. If the lessons were put into A and B categories, then those on Horatius would read : A (1), B (1), B (1), A (2), B (2), B (1), B (1), B (2), A (1) ; those on Robin Hood : A (1), A (1), B (1), B (1), B (2), B (1), B (2), B (2), B (1), B (1). In both series there is

a preponderance of the B (1) type of lesson, that is, oral composition in different forms ; which seems suitable to the age. But those on Horatius are throughout a reinforcement of the first reading, and by degrees make the class intimate with the general structure and also salient details of the poem ; whereas those on the Robin Hood ballad lead away to original effort in composition, but, it is intended, in an atmosphere created by the first two readings. Throughout, all composition, oral or written, whether *précis*, enlargement or the development of an original theme, should be done, as far as possible, with a very definite *mise-en-scène*.

To write of methodical procedure in detail is rather like freezing the sea and saying that it still is water. The more definite the shape you impose, the less fluid it becomes for those who need to move and live in it. In this dilemma I feel it is better to sacrifice shape, if the sacrifice makes for vitality, and instead of attempting a neat manual or outline of instructions I shall pick and choose here and there points of method which seem to me of importance to the aim I have taken and related to a boy's work in successive stages of the Course. Roughly, the selection will follow the division into types of work mentioned on pp. 103-5 : it will deal with reading, oral and written composition approximately from eleven to fourteen years, the question of grammar, the substitute for a classical course after fourteen. Where a type of work, such as practice in description, is obviously suited to all ages, the variation being only one of more or less difficulty, it may be more convenient to continue the treatment

of it beyond the age limit of the section in which it is begun.

### READING

I am here immediately concerned with reading aloud ; for much silent reading in school, as a separate activity, is a poor economy of time—even in a subject in which time can be lavishly wasted to advantage. Reading aloud in the ages ten to fourteen means mostly reading by the teacher, except in lessons which are definitely given up to reading practice. And it should be clear that in such lessons there are no conflicting aims. The focus should be first on the production of exact sound and the facial muscular action involved, simple exact sounds to more and more complex, sequences of words spoken slowly and mechanically without regard to the sense of what is being read, sequences of words read at very marked differences of pace, even grotesque pauses, if you like, since the basis of emphasis is silence, up to very rapid articulation, as for example of a series of telephone numbers, or two times two equal four, or swim, swam, swum and so on, in which a maximum of rapidity and clarity is sought. All this is obviously vocal gymnastics ; it is not meant to be appreciation of content. And even when from this basis of gymnastics one goes on to combine the eye-reading of sentences with their vocal utterance, the direction of stress is from the voice as an instrument to the effect which it can have on the material read. In such lessons one does not want the distraction of continuity, at least of subject matter—the boy wanting all the time to satisfy his curiosity on the next page, and the

next again. His curiosity should be centred in the relation of sound to sense ; and for this he can only take small doses of sense at a time. Conflict of aim in so-called reading-lessons may be the ruin of much industry ; as a result of it practice in correct speech, in spelling, in grammar, and passing comments on this, that or the other word which catches the teacher's fancy, are all herded together with the adventures of some hero who, given a straight course, might finish the lesson with success ; but as it is, he stumbles and the class with him, and if his adventures happen to be in verse, the fiasco is entitled appreciation.

If a class is to follow with its ear the continuity of a narrative poem, even though it has the poem in print open under its eye, the teacher will need all the ingenuity of his voice, all the imaginative concentration of his mind on what he is reading, to make an effective continuity of impressions. Such continuity depends on bringing the sense into a very exact relief ; on varying the emphasis, so that the pattern of the whole is linked together by clear outstanding connections ; on producing a consistent listening mood. Something is needed here more than clear articulation, more even than a good tone : a flexible play of tone is required, and equally a flexible control of time. And a beginner, at least, will have little to spare for anything else if he is going to adapt this flexibility to the interpretation of a poem : for interpret he must, if the poem is to have real live actuality in the round, as it were, for the listening mind : if, to put it at the lowest, it is to be intelligible. In the matter of sense the young boy's eye is a much more backward worker than his ear :



especially if the sense is, as in poems it always is, something more than logical, and only emerges, when one is aware of shades of intensity in feeling or of humour or dignity or pathos or whatever it may be. And through a bad oral rendering a boy, if he happens to be taking any interest in the teacher, may misunderstand a poem, and his eye staring at the words will not correct the misunderstanding.

The beginner cannot take refuge in the plea that he does not wish to prejudice the boy's own interpretation of a poem ; and so shuffle it off, as if it were rather unnatural prose. At twelve a boy takes a poem at its face value : at fifteen, supposing that by that time his critical power is ready and jealous to make its own interpretation, he will not thank a teacher for failing to give his interpretation, even though he may resent it. To read a poem in such a way that the emotional atmosphere in the room is the same after as before the reading, or, in a lesson in which parallel passages of poetry and prose are read, in such a way that there is no intermediate change in emotional atmosphere, means that the teacher has failed or has not attempted to understand the poem himself ; that he has not taken it detail by detail and found how from part to whole it means something to him as a living human being—in so far as he is one,—or that though he has discovered its personal secret he has neglected to make himself physically competent to communicate it.

I do not think it an exaggeration to say that the standard of a teacher's reading is the standard of intelligent activity possible in a class-room under his direction : at any rate in an English lesson, if not in

others. And yet it is strange with what standards some teachers are content in themselves : standards which, if they were adopted by a music-hall artiste, would end his or her career at the end of a week, and which, if the same teacher were transferred to Whitehall, he would immediately reject for his own salvation. It is an unpleasant thought.

Apart from the effect which the voice has on aesthetic discrimination in general, I have been more particularly concerned here with the effect it has on a boy's being able to grasp and retain in his attention a continuous sequence of ideas. This power of concentration, of seeing or feeling things as a whole, of compressing details without loss of their relative significance, a power which distinguishes the intelligent from the stupid, is not being nourished by the teacher who fritters away a continuous piece of narrative either by asking questions to which most of the class can give a so-so answer, or by picking out words every minute on which to hang a little venture into geography or geology or natural history or philology or grammatical accident or what not. If the reading is successful there will be no lack of questions, and they will come spontaneously from the class, and when the reading is over there will be time in another lesson for analysis and seeing whether a class has understood and received a clear impression of the original. Such analysis should begin with the main structural outline and proceed to detail, according as a clear understanding of any detail is needed for the understanding of the main structure. If, for example, fugitives are escaping from a castle rock and the rock is granite, the detail granite will be a subject for more

or less or no enquiry according as a knowledge of its nature is relevant to an understanding of the escape. It will not be a gratuitous excursion into geology. If there are words in a piece which deserve more exploration than is necessary to explain their context, these may be collected and be the nucleus of a lesson in themselves, an exercise in definition, as it were, of which more will be said later. They may give practice in the use of the dictionary, and their meaning may be elucidated by means of quoted or extempore contexts—a composition lesson that may be interesting in itself.

One further point about reading aloud. A successful introduction is important. By the time the reading begins, there should be an atmosphere of expectancy, such as one feels when the curtain goes up on the stage for the first time—provided stall-holders are in their seats. The following I should take to be an example of an unsuccessful beginning to a lesson :

Teacher, to boys hurriedly settling into their places after a hearty break : ‘ Get out your Golden Treasuries and turn to page 68. Page 68—quickly, everyone.’ (Interval of five seconds.) ‘ We are going to read this morning “ Lycidas ”, a poem by—by . . . ? Right, Smith—John Milton. Page 68, and I want you to listen carefully.

“ Yet ”—and if anyone wants to ask a question, let him put his hand up—

“ once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries—”

‘ by the way, Jones, what is the meaning of “ sere ” ?

"Sere" in line 2. You don't know? Tell him, somebody. "Withered", yes, "withered". I suppose, Jones, you've never heard of the "sere, the yellow leaf". Oh, you'd forgotten that. Quite so, quite so—

"harsh and crude—

And with forced fingers rude—

And with forced fingers rude,"—Jones—

"Shatter your leaves",—

and don't let me have to speak to you again—

"before the mellowing year.

Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear

Com-*pels* me to disturb your season due"—

'does anyone notice anything peculiar in that line? "Compels", Smith? Quite right. What do you call that sort of thing? A misprint? Possibly. Any other suggestion? No? Well, it may equally well be called poetic licence. Make a note of that, everyone, —line 7—"compels"—poetic licence—spelt e-n-c-e, Jones—

"For Lycidas is dead"—

And there we may leave him. I'm afraid I have followed this imaginary but not improbable teacher beyond his opening, tempted to illustrate one or two other defects in an appreciation lesson.

Circumstances themselves give few lessons an artistic beginning. The jangle or buzzing of a bell, the trooping in of boys, either from a break or another lesson, their heads a medley of ideas, their moods as varied. To throw any lines of a poem into this welter

is, strictly speaking, to destroy the poem. To convert the welter into a mood of expectancy may need no more than the presence of the teacher, and the tone of his voice, as he says 'Get out your Golden Treasuries and turn to page 68', and the quality of the silence, which becomes more intense, until he breaks it with

'Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more . . .'  
That may be an appropriate introduction with an exceptional man, and only with an exceptional man. And even he may feel it wiser at times to put more between distracting outside interests and the poem itself—possibly a record, if he has a gramophone, or the showing of a picture which is in tone with the poem, or better still perhaps, the equivalent in his own words.

Certainly with younger boys, a *mise en scène* of some kind is almost a necessity to success in any lesson in which it is expected that the imagination will play a part. Without something of an artistic setting the imagination will either lie dormant or lose itself in vague gyrations. And for the teacher himself it has its value. In the reading of a ballad, for example, of Robin Hood, to turn the desk into an oak stump and the class into a semicircle of outlaws with a wall of trees and silence beyond them, and, if a subdued tone is desirable, the chance of hostile intruders beyond the wall of dark silent trees—all this may remove from the teacher himself the encumbrance of being a very sophisticated member of a mechanical era in civilisation and make his interpretation of another atmosphere of life more convincing.

I know that there are those who demand that the appreciation of a poem should be something immediate

between the poem and the listener, and who would consequently deprecate any personal reference to the poet, as an irrelevance or a contamination. Doubtless the expert critic should be able to gather from the poem itself all that it is necessary to know about the poet ; his taste quite proof against the absence of a signature. But we are dealing with the boy who is not yet an expert critic ; our task is more akin to that of getting an animal which will have to make many journeys to enjoy its first experience of boarding a lorry. And if there is something in the life of a poet whose appeal will more readily engage attention for the poem, then it should be told as aptly as possible. I quite agree that biographical incidents may turn to mere anecdote and, like stationary relics, through fixity in time and space may for the adult impede a true interpretation both of writer and writing. A visit to Haworth Parsonage, for example, excellent museum that it is, might on the balance impair one's estimate of Emily Brontë as author of *Wuthering Heights*, even though it might help to explain certain characteristics of her writing, characteristics of cultural and social tradition ; its sidelights on the prose might be shadows on the poetry of that work. But to the boy even a life-size photographic reproduction of a page of the Gondal diaries might prove an item of interest, which made the difference between his having or not having a wish to read anything she had written.

I have referred to ' Lycidas ' ; this is more because I have in the past found boys of sixteen apparently enjoy it than because it is an ideal selection. Those boys happened to be studying classics, and that may

have influenced their choice. But supposing that one felt this poem to be suitable to that age, its contact, for example, with the natural world compensating for its ecclesiastical tantrums, and supposing that the actual reading of it was in itself a revelation of its content to an interested listener, yet the degree of initial interest might vary very much with what preceded the reading. There are many boys at that age who are quite capable of shutting their ears to anything 'classical',—and in so far as that means accepting as good anything which elderly authority finds it convenient to call good, one can sympathise with them and regret that they in their turn will be equally elderly and authoritarian. But the mischief might be averted if the 'classical' could be presented in its true light as an experimental attempt to express something which will concern men as much in 1937 as it did in 1637. Here in 'Lycidas' it is the expression of grief: a public expression of private grief, probably sincere in intention. Milton had lost a friend: his was a case of ordinary bereavement. Actual bereavement may not be an experience within the circle of the class. But it is not necessary that it should be: in fact, its occurrence would preclude its use in school. But may not boys have, either from fiction, the stage or films, enough second-hand experience on which to study the practical problem of how to record such an emotion as grief? From the films alone they can collect evidence of the fact that words uttered in excess of emotion do not bear repetition and do not communicate very much, removed from the circumstances in which they are uttered. If grief demands an outlet in communication it must take

account of those to whom it is communicated, and also of the person mourned,—that is, where expression of grief is objective. This can be shown by simple examples ; and incidentally provide interesting exercises in inventive composition. Various types of epitaph may be used to show the difficulty of selecting material and language that will be a true and permanently intelligible communication. They may also show how easily this type of communication tends to be insincere. Again there is an opportunity for invention. To compose an epitaph is a test of the understanding of the problem. It is also an exercise in economy and careful selection of words.

In two or three lessons of this kind a class may realise the important point—that the record of one's feelings may not be as easy as falling off a log. They may begin to understand that there may have to be a certain reticence, something statuesque in a statement of even a sincerely felt intense emotion, if it is to be truly conveyed to others. Then they will listen to such an elegy as ' Lycidas ' with at least a sensitive ear. They may condemn it still as being too artificial, but there is the chance that the condemnation may be the outcome of a genuine discovery of what is in the poem.

So much hovering round death may seem an unsuitable activity to some. Actually death is pretty much a figure of speech at sixteen. But I use the instance only to suggest a different kind of introduction to a reading lesson.

As boys show themselves competent readers they may take part in the reading. In the interest of continuity, what part they are to take may be settled before



the reading begins : just as they receive parts in a *Play Way* lesson. The exclusion of boys from reading aloud on which I have insisted, except in lessons specially designed for practice in reading, is to a certain extent at variance with *Play Way* methods ; and nobody can deny that those methods have been very successful ; and they should be studied by all teachers of English at their source,—in Caldwell Cook's *Play Way*. But the reading of a continuous narrative is reading to an audience. In a dramatic reading all may be engaged ; and even when there is an audience—which mostly happens,—the form of dramatic material is designed to emphasise its continuity, whatever the reading. Even rough and ready dramatic presentation through the visible relation of one actor to another, through position, movement, difference of voices, gives points of stress on which a continuity of impression can be based. But even in the *Play Way* there is a limit to what dramatic presentation can bear ; and my own feeling is that to get good results from it a certain initial standard of good reading is desirable.

I have said that silent reading in the bulk, as of fiction, should take place out of the class-room ; but one may wish to test both the reading itself and the degree of intelligence and accurate thinking used in reading. A boy may, for example, if left to himself, form a habit of unnecessarily slow eye movement ; or of reading at a stolid uniform pace, irrespective of the relative importance of one group of words and another. Some boys may always be slow readers ; but the nearer they can get to a page-at-a-glance faculty the more useful they will be to themselves and others. The means of

acquiring efficient pace will be scattered in various kinds of lessons, provided that a teacher is aware of the quality of the boy's reading ; and he will be aware of it if he tests it from time to time—if, for example, he sets a passage to be read in class within a certain time-allowance, by well-selected examination he can find out interesting details concerning what a boy remembers in that time and what discrimination he shows in what he remembers.

A teacher also wishes to keep in touch with what is read out of school—I am not thinking of prying and espionage. If boys have confidence in him, he may be able by suggestions to give them a chance of finding a bridge between different types of pleasure. The more widely read he is himself, the better adapted his suggestions will be to individual enquiries—provided that he has a memory, or a substitute for it in a neat notebook ! If the class can run a little library of its own, he may be asked to be on its consultative committee. Not all classes, unfortunately, can draw on books from home, and as yet the State does not regard an ample provision of books as a cultural obligation to its future members so-called. I have had one experience of a class library and also a class magazine, and I found both make a very favourable point of contact between different shades of taste in reading. Both were the creation of a class aged 12, about twenty in number ; the library was assembled and dispersed term by term ; the class decided that the right to borrow should depend on the contribution of a minimum of 3 books. Boys could contribute as many more as they liked, but the contributor of 3 and of 20 were equally under the same

rule of borrowing only one book at a time. The average number of books collected each term was about 150, including about 30 which I provided on invitation. The running of the library employed two or three officials, of whom the last appointed, after a few weeks' experience of doing without him, was an indefatigable examiner of books for any crease, tear, ink, grease or other mark on their pages which was not obvious on first borrowing.

However, this is a digression, and what I have in mind now is not so much merely keeping in touch with reading out of school as suggesting a standard of intelligent care in reading. This can be indirectly done by the teacher's attitude to books in school and through various types of composition work, as I hope will be apparent later. But it may be desirable to test the reading of specific books more directly. There is no difficulty in doing this if the book is one set by the school, as the school must then provide copies ; and no difficulty if the class is working on Dalton lines, as each boy can write answers to questions on the book he has been reading or make a synopsis of it. In fact, I have seen published little questionnaires on a dozen or more stories that will even save a teacher the trouble of thinking out a question and stimulate examination habits in the boy—all for sixpence. But this is not quite the test which I imagine will interest the boy in the pattern of what he has been reading and give him a feeling for the enjoyment of structure or anything which is not contained in a point of momentary sensation. Pleasure in mere incident is a very genuine pleasure, and demands its place. The shadow of the villain's auto-

matic on the blind, and the heroine's modest surrender on an old-world couch—one after the other play thrilling tricks with the temperature of adolescent blood, and generate energy, powerful in one direction or another. But, if books are read merely for incidents, for the one or two well-thumbed pages, either of crime or sex, reading becomes merely indulgence in a series of close-ups, and publishers expand the well-thumbed pages into three or four hundred, all designed to take a man out of himself ; and all the school has done is to make it possible for a man to live permanently without anything worth calling a self. An examination paper is not likely to extend this pleasure in the incidental to enjoyment of the essential : even a written précis may be no more than giving a superficial gloss of order to an incongruous assortment of facts. It may leave a boy unaware of the real content of a novel, because he has not seen the pattern which gives significance to incidents through their relations to one another, spatial and temporal ; and until incidents have that significance, there can be no intelligent preparation for understanding later the meaning expressed through a character or for feeling the value of different atmospheric emphasis. The boy to whom the facts of *Treasure Island* and *The Ringer* are equally a succession of spotlight thrills and no more will permanently find in *The Ringer* a more adequate representation of human activity : he will not only ignore the more serious plane of character on which Long John Silver is drawn,—for that he may be allowed fool's pardon, for it is possible that Stevenson was wasting elaboration on too slight a pattern of human affairs,—but he will equally ignore, as he ages,

any serious attempt to interpret human life ; his eye will crush finely selected detail, as if it stalked through the pages in a jack-boot ; his reading will be slovenly, his appetite grossly sentimental. And as he reads, so will he think.

To give a tonic to reading, I would suggest periodic lessons in which the structure of a novel, or the structure of a chapter in a novel, was analysed. They would be oral lessons ; the boys supplying the subject matter, the teacher suggesting the lines on which it was to be examined, the two together working out some kind of synthesis,—it may be no more than a diagram of the shape they have given the material, presumably an approximation to the shape the author had in mind. Important as such a lesson would be in focussing the eye on details which might have been carelessly passed over, its chief importance would be the active co-operation in speech with a teacher who is intelligently finding his own way through the press of detail. The immediate aim of the lesson would be the discovery of a shape, not the improvising of a critique. To make the aim avowedly critical would lead merely to premature and strained effort to make judgments before that about which the judgment is made is adequately known and understood. In selecting the shape—in including, for example, one detail and excluding another on grounds of relative appropriateness,—critical power will be exerted ; but at first it will be little more than discerning the actual features of an incident or succession of incidents.

If the teacher can impart some vividness to the treatment of the subject—which will depend very much on

how far the subject is alive to him and how far he is merely re-cooking a stale dish,—there should be little danger of the lesson sterilising interest where the first reading has caused a thrill. Such interest is usually in a hero; also he usually provides what continuity the boy has discerned in the passage of events; and in a sense, the structural analysis is merely the rationalisation of the hero. And a boy will welcome most means of getting a little more news of a favourite whose career for him has been cut short by the last page of a book, however satisfactory the ending.

There is, however, a practical obstacle to such lessons, and that is the fact that two or three boys may be able to get a copy of *Quentin Durward*, two or three more a copy of *The Black Arrow*, half a dozen of *The Cloister on the Hearth*, and so on; but the whole class may not be able to get copies of the same book at the same time, unless the school has sets of novels to lend. If it has not, as is probable, then some time may have to elapse between the reading and the analysis, so that there may be an opportunity for all to get hold of the same novels. Or, if a foreknowledge of the plot is no bar to being absorbed in the details of its unfolding, a novel just read only by one part of the class could be analysed, the material coming from those who had read it, the others taking the chief share with the teacher in reconstructing the shape of the story, and perhaps through their curiosity making useful demands on those with the information. Or, if to know the whole plot is to take all the taste out of a subsequent reading, only so much of the plot need be reproduced as will be enough to make a clearly defined continuity.

One might say that in an artistic work continuity stands clear from its first paragraph. That is probably true ; but in order that the immature mind may realise continuity, it will need at first to see a bold outline in a major pattern, and this will not appear before the pattern has taken on a certain length.

A few suggestions to those who may be doubtful of the next step to take—when they find on their blackboard a skeleton version of a story made from the accounts of various boys. The account given and anatomised probably follows some sort of time sequence ; and almost certainly the sequence of chapters, if memory has been good. But in spite of there being this sequence the version may have very little coherent pattern ; it may seem not even concise, merely garbled ; in the process of curtailment proportions may have been lost, clear stresses obscured. Or in spite of beginning at the beginning, there may appear to be very little sequence in the abridgement, different groups of characters crossing each other's paths in a confusing congestion, and the only continuity left being that of the wool itself in a skein which is unwound from the wrong end.

Confusion and congestion on the blackboard will be distinctly lessened if the teacher works to a scale clear in his own mind. If one were drawing a picture of the ship ' 534 ' on a scale  $3 \times 2$  ft., there would have to be a very drastic elimination of detail, otherwise either most of the ship would be off the paper, or what was on the paper would be a mess of indistinguishables. On the other hand, in order that the drawing may preserve the true and characteristic outlines of the ship,

there must be a very careful inclusion of essential details. So if a teacher wishes to have a convenient rough outline of *Treasure Island*, for example, he must pick and choose according to a definite scale from the material that is orally reproduced by the class. It will not be the scale which he would use if he were accepting an outline of events on the Island itself or the cabin-boy's exploit on the *Hispaniola*. If examination of detail on these other scales is felt to be necessary, it must be done in separate lessons. And not only must the teacher pick and choose material according to scale, he must also guide oral reproduction according to such a scale, and that means getting the boys to realise and, if possible, decide on what that scale should be. In other words, no analysis can be made unless a synthesis is actually in process; that is, even the rough outline on the blackboard must have a really continuous shape—although it may not be the final and most satisfactory form of that shape, and may need recasting in detail. It is not a rough haphazard outline, nor even a mere sequence of chapters. That it may have significant shape from the beginning, the teacher must know where to begin. He may find that point in the title, not necessarily in the actual title—that may have been a corrupt selection for commercial ends—but in what he considers to be a more suitable version of it. If he begins by asking himself why the actual title is what it is, whether its wording is a focus of co-ordination, whether the who or what in its reference is a main pivot of the story, how other parts of the story are related to it, and if after such and similar questions he is dissatisfied with the appropriateness of



the actual title, let him invent a more appropriate title for himself, and, whether it satisfies him more or not, let him note what complications of detail he has to resolve, why he chooses to stress this event more than that, as essential to his conception of a new title ; if he does this, he will have, at least, an emergency pattern ; enough to give a lead to the class and find the key to his mouth.

If a teacher finds that words either in the mind or on paper do not in themselves give his ideas any very clear order, perhaps the visual distinctness of a diagram will help him. Mr Herbert Read, in analysing the picture ' La Baignade ' by Seurat, once wrote <sup>1</sup> : ' The dominant colours are blue and yellow, with red as a constant multiple. The equation might be symbolised as  $Y + r^1 + b^2 = B + r^1 + y^2$ , but I do not guarantee the mathematical rectitude of such a symbol.' My own inference is that to put his ideas in the form of a mathematical equation helped him to clarify his analysis. And I once saw a beginner save a lesson in which a story was being analysed by drawing a staircase diagram on the blackboard, the vertical lines representing events, which moved up to the crisis, horizontal those in which the story more or less marked time. Being committed to these lines, the teacher rightly or wrongly had to find a definite character in events ; and both teacher and class, in going up the steps, went in a definite and interesting direction, when they had both seemed likely to flounder in dullness. One often sees a similar use of the diagram in history lessons. And provided that they are

regarded as an aid in weakness only—otherwise there is a sure tendency to sacrifice the actual structure to diagrammatic convenience—diagrams can be invented for most analysis ; as, for example, the single straight continuity line, like a Roman road with villages lying either side directly connected with it and also connected with one another by secondary roads ; the comparative graph—for example, a graph comparing features of *Swiss Family Robinson* and *Robinson Crusoe* in terms of the co-ordinates time and progress : or even a chessboard illustrative of atmosphere, in which grave and gay (or as many characteristics as there are colours of chalk) are represented in the light and shade of appropriate squares.

In analysis one's first concern is that the class should realise what is given them in a story and not idly substitute for it what they think has been given because they have not taken the trouble to read the original. When they know what is in the original and what has been intended in the original, they may then criticise its contents. This applies to all ages ; there is none at which it is not very easy in criticism to mistake one's own for another's idea. To begin with subtleties of plot and character is to invite criticism of values before there has been recognition of objective facts. It is true that in what I call objective facts there has been evaluation—for example, to select Long John Silver as one of the principal figures in *Treasure Island* involves setting a certain value on him, as part of the pattern of the story, a value not dependent on the number of times his name appears in the book—and in so far, to recognise a pattern at all, strictly speaking, involves

criticism ; but to that degree it is so conditioned by the obvious that it cannot go far astray. The obvious in the pattern of *Treasure Island*, for example, I should take to be such things as Pugh and the dead-man's-chest incident, Jim Hawkins overhearing the conspiracy on the *Hispaniola*, Long John Silver's appearance at Bristol, and so on : I should regard such a selection of the obvious as probably in agreement with the author's intention. Through such incidents and characters concerned in them the outline will run. It will form a fixed pattern. And, as it becomes fixed, characters will take on a definite form. That means, that when one takes a part of the pattern and examines it in detail, say, a chapter or an episode in a chapter, one will have certain data about a character or focus of action which will give an objective direction to one's judgments about it. Incidentally it will make for clarity and simplification. I do not say that in this more detailed examination one's conception of a character may not undergo very important changes, and in consequence some revision of the general pattern become necessary. In the same way, a closer study of the language may also lead to a reconsideration of the general pattern. Events which at first sight may have seemed to stand in a bold black-and-white relief may relapse into hardly contrasted shades of grey, and if one can think of the pattern not as one merely of line but of colour masses, such changes, due to closer study, may mean a total revision and the emergence of a new pattern.

This is unlikely in the early stages, where the story analysed will have clear simple static outlines, whether

of event, character, environment, emotion. But in writing the above I have in mind analysis in the middle school, as for example when a book or a play is being read in school—detailed study for an examination. This is very often as niggling as counting the pores on the toes of a Colossus ; or counting the lines on a finger-print, by which one may recognise that it belongs to a particular criminal, not quite the same thing as knowing the criminal personally. The alternative is not necessarily to let a class lose itself in vague generalities of judgment, to use the original only as a dim background in front of which the young critic discourses on his reactions to himself, or substitutes so much of some critical textbook for the original that if you changed the order of the scenes in a play, or assigned actions to others than their original agents, he would not be aware of such minor alterations. I say this in the interests of critical originality, not against it.

As with *Treasure Island* at an earlier age, so with a play like *Macbeth* at a later, in an analysis one wants first to know what it is all about—one may eventually probe it to the extent of examining textual emendations where these affect important issues,—but without the first and succeeding steps one is not likely to consider details with any well-proportioned discrimination. And the first step is a crude provisional pattern, not a character study, nor a search for recurring keywords, such as blood<sup>1</sup>—the kind of pattern which kept the audience at the Globe from demanding their money back,—the obvious plot, which all could follow in all its turnings, and such emotional emphases as would be

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kolbe, F. C., *Shakespeare's Way*, a psychological study.

obvious to all, if not appreciated by all, as they were produced through the particular medium of the stage. They may include stage business, giving a stress to events apparently negligible in the printed text. Such a pattern may be all that some boys can get out of the play ; at least they get that ; but even though others finally see in the play a pattern in which there is little trace of the earlier melodramatic crudity, even one, for example, in which all significant action is subjective, a scheme of psychological activities, their critical judgment will have had to make a reconstruction from something actual. Study of character and language may have meant revising the whole initial pattern : and the revised pattern itself meant the revision of character and reinterpretation of language, and so from act to act, and scene to scene, with constant interchange between fluid elements, and all with an eye to the fact stressed in the original outline, that any interpretation must take note of the original medium of expression, a stage. Actually under cover of these lengthy words, all that this means may be that most of the class see in *Macbeth* himself a study in ambition rather than a clumsy gangster ; but at least, if as critics they decide that this was a case of fatal ambition, they will have come to the decision through the play itself : which is also a wise policy for the teacher.

If he has any doubts of his ability to analyse such a play as *Macbeth* except in critical terms and according to judgments which he has borrowed from others ready-made, he would be wiser to try some other kind of subject with his class, if the syllabus gave him a chance—a daily paper, for example, or two daily

papers, one from Fleet Street and one from a provincial town ; and take as his aim the discovery of the nature and function of what is called a newspaper ; and to this end, first examine quantitatively in what proportion the contents are distributed among various types of matter, that is, how much space is allowed to advertisements, reviews, photographs, etc. ;—perhaps advertisement is too general a term, as it may include anything from a corset to an Armistice Ceremony : in fact, he will find that a quantitative estimate can only be a rough approximation to fact ; and he can then correct this estimate by a qualitative examination of each set of items, and by the time he has sifted out what may be strictly called news—agreement on the definition of which term may require a lesson in itself—and if he is fortunate, has compared a news item with his own first-hand knowledge of the event it records,—then he may understand some essentials of his work as an analyst, and be in a better position to set his own course in other critical directions.

### ORAL COMPOSITION

In the last few years there has been an overt recognition of the value boys derive from practice in expressing their ideas orally ; at all ages, and especially up to the time when they have the power to express themselves with any certitude in writing. A boy need not now be condemned to stumble with his pen through two pages of melted syntax—at a time when crawling inkily over the up-and-down strokes of a word is a problem in itself. He can say what he thinks in a short speech, and it is better for him socially.

Speaking has not the exactitude of writing : it is a more temporary form of expression, a less complex art ; and to expect from it what is only to be found in written composition leads in practice to a wasteful confusion. But it has its own points, equally valuable. One does not expect from it expansion of vocabulary : but one does expect facility in adapting word to thought, which means, on the one hand, freedom from inhibitions and does not, on the other hand, mean a tendency to the merely garrulous. One does not expect subtle and precise mastery of detail ; but one does expect the power of arranging and retaining in the mind a coherent structure of ideas long enough for its adequate expression. Writing may take its own time ; speaking, whatever its pace, must have a certain speed of thought as its basis. In both writing and speaking one has to adapt expression to a particular recipient. But in oral practice this necessity is made obvious : a boy before his fellows has to meet a particular atmosphere. And one consequence of this is that correction is immediate and therefore economical. If a boy does not make his meaning clear or if he is unconvincing, he has in the class or teacher an immediate index of the fault. Written correction, on the other hand, of written obscurity may profit nobody but a shareholder in fountain pens.

But oral and written composition are alike in one thing. If practice in them, that is, practice in the whole art of communication, is to be successful, the mental strain involved must be adjusted to the capacity of the speaker or writer. This may seem to be a pedantic way of saying ' You can't make a child run

before it can walk.' A simple plain fact, but the analogy is dangerous. A child which cannot walk will not be prevented from walking by your efforts to make it run. Nature sees to that. But a boy who finds the strain of composing too much for him may lose the taste for it, and he may not recover it; he may permanently express himself in a muddled, haphazard way; he may permanently hate any serious effort either of his own or of others to use words well. Permanently, because if overstrain is the cause of his trouble, it is likely to continue. It is there only because the teacher has not been aware of it; and if he is not aware of it in the beginning, he is not likely to become aware of it later.

The boy should have to meet difficulties; but not necessarily too thick upon one another. That will not happen if it is realised that a boy who expresses something original, so far as he is concerned, may undergo more stress than the quality of the result suggests. He has probably to contend with limitations of vocabulary, uncertainties of syntax, and other defects of verbal technique; but besides these, he is involved in the far more uncomfortable process of selecting out of fugitive ideas a combination of matter and form appropriate to an intention which may itself be modified even while matter and form are becoming fixed. The more he can follow a scheme already fixed, the lighter the strain. That is obvious. It is also obvious that if he is allowed to escape all effort of providing a scheme for himself, he will suffer in initiative and intelligence. He will become merely an incomplete machine. But he may become incapable of any effort if he is expected to undertake too much too soon.



However much one may wish for originality in work, one should not be disappointed if there is less shown than was hoped for. One is inclined, as a rule, to underestimate its extent and quality. If the same class is asked to draw an object in pastels and illustrate an idea in pastels, many of the reproductions may show surprising technical skill and most of the illustrations none ; and if a teacher wished to impress a visitor to the room he would probably display the reproductions only ; and that would probably mean that he was unaware of the most remarkable thing about a picture, the fact that the particular form of its content is what it is. Where there was nothing, there is something. If he judges creative power merely by standards of technical skill, he is likely to ask boys to deal with ideas beyond their creative capacity and judge the results merely by their technical failure. In that way he will discourage initiative and increase verbal inaccuracy.

Some people fear that it stifles imagination to take a topic and discuss it with a class so that it has the nucleus of a definite shape, before the boys venture on it for themselves on paper. It might, given an unimaginative and insensitive teacher : otherwise, I think this procedure is likely to lead to more truly imaginative work at a later age. In fact, up to the age of sixteen I think that, artificial as the separation may seem, if you want boys to concentrate on form, it may be wise to relieve them of some part, if not the whole, of the effort of supplying the matter, or if you want them to concentrate on the matter, to suggest certain formal conditions. To what extent this may take place I hope to make clear by practical instances later.

Of oral composition the most common kind, and under pleasant circumstances the least strenuous kind, is conversation ; by question and answer or reciprocity of statement its effort is distributed among two or more people. I mention it here because it is so much the breath of a lesson that it may not be thought of as composition. We may not even be as conscious of it as our breathing : for at least we notice difficulty of breathing. The quality of our conversation, on the other hand, may be quite distressing without our being aware of it. And further, a voluble teacher may easily confuse it with his own monologues ; a so-called good disciplinarian with the ingenuity of his own tongue. It requires skill to direct a lesson in such a way that all boys have a fair chance of joining in an interchange of ideas. It needs tact and insight, if the diffident are to talk and the assertive to talk within measure ; if informality is to be intelligent and regulated intercourse of speech is not to become stale.

Conversation has these claims to be regarded seriously as a starting-point for composition, that is, for practice in expressing a structure of thought. It does not demand as sustained an effort of concentration as narrative : it allows the beginner to draw at any moment on the resources of a more developed mind : it is a link with familiar habits of speech and, as such, is a basis for a natural style of expression in writing. In it a boy's vernacular or slang may blossom into what can be genuinely called idiom. In the average written composition, even of a graduate, an essay for example, there is not usually an excess of the idiomatic. That, it may be said, is natural in the work of any-

one with average attainments. I do not agree. The average can have individual characteristics. I should impute it rather to attempting too much in a difficult mode of composition too early. A boy in conversation can make a statement, perfectly clear in meaning, yet incomplete in grammatical structure, because he can complete it structurally by a look or the tone of his voice or a gesture ; and what is more, by forcing him to complete the grammatical structure in speech, one can destroy the clearness of his meaning. For example, if a boy answers ' Can't ' to a request, it is not his speech that is at fault. To make him say ' I cannot ' may appear to be a grammatical completion of his statement. It is actually not the same statement. His original meaning has been distorted. He meant to express quite clearly an emotional attitude. And to let him suppose that you regard ' Can't ' and ' I cannot ' as identical statements may be good for his manners but bad for his English. The use of accessories to grammar, such as look, gesture and all the signs of speech, is common, of course, to all kinds of oral composition ; but if the length of a story, for example, which he is relating is too much of a burden for his mind he loses the natural ease of conversation, and with it a command of these accessories.

To find how to convey their equivalent on paper is not the discovery of a day : not to find how to convey it leaves his written thought crippled. And to deny a boy their use in the meanwhile will stand against his converting what is valuable in his slang into an attractive idiom. A study of good models can refine the uses of idiom, but does not create those uses where they do

not exist ; as in a boy who out of the class-room can express himself vigorously and exactly in a slangy vernacular, but in the class-room has been made into an obscure mute in ' good English '. There is slang and slang, or perhaps I am including under slang what should be more precisely called genetic idiom : or the individual divergence from language conventions, which, imitated, becomes itself a new convention known as slang. These individual divergences are good, bad and indifferent. The good, those which are forced into existence because there is no other adequate way of expressing an idea, are continually renewing the vitality of the main body of language. The boy in natural speech diverges from the conventional ; but if through the school the divergence becomes a permanent breach, both his spoken and written communications will suffer.

Conversation, under the form of question and answer, discussion, suggestions, is the staple of many exercises in oral composition : exercises such as the collective invention or dramatisation of a story, or a letter, or the oral completion of a story (on lines similar to those detailed in Hartog's *Teaching of Writing*) ; also, as incidental criticism, it enters into lessons in which prepared short speeches are made or short stories told, either original or reproduced from a reading—narrative compositions which demand a more sustained effort from the speaker ; and of these speech-making is probably a more difficult activity than storytelling, up to the age of fourteen.

In the story the fact that events have a time sequence and definite relations in space makes general continuity

easier. A speech may have a coherent sequence of reasoning ; within the capacity of the boy's mind, but by no means easy to maintain ; or instead of continuity, it has merely an apparent order, marked by a sequence of numbers from one to three or four or more, a sequence which can be a thin gloss over complete chaos of thought. Firstly, secondly, thirdly have had a long service in sermons and political speeches ; but it may be that one has to be content with them, as a boy's approach to coherence. One could probably improve the structural continuity of his speeches, if examples were worked out first with the aid of teacher and black-board ; just as later practice in drawing up skeleton essays should precede the writing of essays in full tissue. But with the young boy the making of a speech is something of an adventure, and measures taken to improve its quality, unless they are incidental and informal, might easily destroy spontaneity.

The story told in the first person is probably easier than that told in the third. The intimacy of the speaker with the event narrated makes it easier for him to supply connection between thought-group and thought-group, that is, sentence and sentence. The story which contains dialogue is easier than plain narrative—at least, so far as I can judge from observation. A boy can rescue his theme thus from the aloofness of the third person. It would seem that, when he is using the third person, he feels after a time conscious of his only connection between one sentence and the next being the word ' and '. The feeling may be due to a natural desire for variation or to a fear of correction. Some teachers unwisely condemn the natural ' and ' ;

they forget Malory. They are afraid of simplicity ; out of respect for some fetish, best known to themselves, they require a boy to twist his sentences into complex grotesque knots : even when they allow him a theme for which a simple series of simply conceived ideas is the most convincing mode of expression. If they were policemen, can one imagine the nature of their evidence in court ? On the other hand, one can understand that the boy himself may hanker after a change : partly because it is not always easy to use the third person without ambiguity, or because a series of events is interwoven with statements of motive or feeling, and some ideas, which need a finite verb for clear predication, are too closely dependent on others to be even semi-detached from them, and so difficulties of connection arise ; and the simplest way to solve them is to fall back on habits of thought natural to conversation. The boy falls back on dialogue. This gives him a natural connection between ideas through its greater variety of persons, tenses and modes of structure ; and, in addition, makes him feel that what he says is alive and kicking. He is there in the tradition of the fable.

Dialogue is the basis of dramatisation. The turning of a story into a play is excellent class work. It is, of course, a combination of oral and written composition. I have known a teacher with a class aged twelve make this the whole of a term's work. With his aid they turned an *Arabian Nights* tale into a pantomime, which was later acted with success. To those boys English became a source of pleasure, and not only that : the teacher had the sense to see that he was giving a unity to all kinds of verbal activity. Dramatisation, among

other things, needs a constant change of mental focus and angle of vision ; and nothing can be better for a boy than to realise that there is more than one way of looking at a thing. It also provides a very definite purpose for the focal variation. It cuts down in order to get material within a clear survey : it expands in order to bring to detail just that emphasis necessary for dramatic reproduction. It extracts what is essential to stage action : it makes a boy look for the kind of word which will be appropriate to the participants in any one point of the action. It encourages a sense of structure. Even a boy can discover that if a scene begins with a climax, which contains all that one wishes to know from that scene, and then peters out into an anticlimax of redundancies, it leaves the listener finally bored. He can discover that there is such a thing as suspense of interest, that if what he says or writes is to be listened to, it must make the listener feel that it is leading him to some point and that at every step he wishes to know more, until the final satisfaction. However crude the dramatic art shown in turning a narrative episode into a stage scene, it is a natural and persuasive way of developing in a boy a sense of order and balance in communication.

The letter is akin to conversation ; it is personal in treatment, and has the advantage of first, second and third person, and the range of statement, question, request, wish, command, an elasticity which should give ease of connection between sentences or groups of ideas. It has the advantage also of being directed to a definite reader, which should prescribe a definite attitude to be conveyed in the writing. Actually writing letters in

school is often a waste of time. They are either addressed to a name merely, or if to an actual person, without any guarantee that the boy can sincerely be conscious of any particular attitude towards that person. In the joint oral composition of a letter a teacher can, if he has some skill, produce a more definite attitude to an imaginary person than a boy can often feel towards a near relative. The writing of the letter must be staged, so that in every sentence there is some clear guide to a distinction between what is relevant and what not. Just as, for example, a class in composing a detective story is more likely to think clearly if it has half a dozen odd clues in front of it, a button, piece of cloth, half a ticket, etc., than if it is free to roam at will, so a letter will gain point by a similar conditioning of subject matter and recipient. This usefulness of a *mise en scène* comes out clearly if you wish the class to make a précis of the letter after it has been worked out on the blackboard. You can tell them it should be short, and have no superfluous words. But if you tell them it is to be in the form of a telegram and they will be allowed exactly one shilling to spend, they have an intelligible motive for economy. Their efforts on paper can be read in a minute or two, their quality gauged and obvious difficulties selected for a solution on the blackboard, to confirm what care is needed to convey an accurate impression when there has to be economy in words. To use the telegram as the text for another letter, to be sent to a different type of recipient, is to emphasise again the meaning-value of words and to give practice in change of mental focus. Similarly, with its money conditions behind it, the advertisement



of a house in a newspaper is a useful *précis* of an oral description of a known building ; but I hesitate to take the advertisement as the text for an expansion in the form of a house agent's description for the purpose of selling the house : it is an excellent example of conveying an impression from a different angle of vision ; but English is not a pure science. A diplomatic letter, an ultimatum, a press report, is another example of setting the stage.

Reproduction of a story is practice in narrative without the strain of creating the original. It depends on the length of the original whether the reproduction is mostly a test of memory, that is, a repetition or a reproducing of the original in one's own terms. Each may have its value. The repetition of a short episode or anecdote, as far as possible in the original words, though it depends for its accuracy on the memory, does not preclude an understanding of the structure, and at the same time may conduce to assimilation of whatever merits there are in the original, as a skilful expression of the episode. On the other hand, telling a story in one's own words, though the memory is still engaged, entails also the effort of a re-creation : and distinct selective power, if the story is of any length. As a compensation, if necessary, the memory can be helped by notes, made while the story is read. These notes should be nothing more than key words, or, at the most, very short phrases. And these are not so easy to make successfully as some might think. Well made, they are very expert *précis*, and the making of them a very valuable habit, if it can be acquired. This should not be forgotten in arranging lessons. A story may be read not

for reproduction but for the quality of the notes made and the critical help given in making them. I stress again the selecting of single words or brief phrases, whether from the original or representing the original : these rather than so elaborate a thing as a complete sentence. I do so because the mind has great temptations to inertia, and when it gives form to any of the fugitive ideas which pass through it, the form tends to remain static. It is as though the mind was so relieved to have something settled in the ever-changing flux of its contents that it is satisfied to take the first shape of an idea to be the best. The danger of this to composition must be apparent. Suppose a boy is trying to write on some topic ; even if it is one of his own choice and interest, he has to collect material, ideas. However much his assembling of ideas is governed by a direct line, as it were, of thought, ideas do not keep within one plane. If they are plentiful, they crowd on each other from many directions at once ; if they are not plentiful, they still do not present themselves with any consideration for the writer's convenience. In either case, attention seizes on a few, fixes them on paper, and once there, and because they are there, they tend to dominate the whole scheme. They appear on paper in a definite spatial order ; this is given the status of an order of thought, even though its contents have no logical sequence—so far as the conscious mind can judge ; and even though by standards of the subconscious artistic unity may exist in logical non-sequence, one cannot give any conscious aid to expression by those standards, nor take the responsibility of letting a boy use them as his only guide to communication.

If his ideas appear on paper not only in sentence form, but in well-turned or imposing language, they are still more dangerous. A good-looking set of words is a very difficult thing to treat severely. And so it remains, isolated from its true context, which disappeared as it emerged from the mind; a rigid obstruction to the new context of ideas which the mind is seeking to make coherent.

And further, if sentences are used as notes, they take time to write : and time is critical when ideas are on the wing ; and they also have, as they are written, a way of overflowing the paper ; and it is not an unknown thing that one may recognise that the order of ideas on a crowded page of writing is poor, but still be content with it, because any change would mean rewriting the whole ; or one may neglect an important idea, because there is literally no room to insert it.

Suggestive key words leave the mind free to develop them according to a required context ; they allow it to retain elasticity ; they do not prejudice readjustment. So I feel they are worth study.

As an example of making notes,—for an aid to reproduction,—I submit the following. The originals are the first half-dozen paragraphs of *The Six Swans*, and the 60th chapter of *Moby Dick*.

*Six Swans* (1)

King hunting, lost in forest  
old woman's conditions  
marries daughter  
,, -d before  
6 boys 1 girl

(2)

King lost  
  
marries cottage girl  
,, -d before  
6 boys 1 girl

*Six Swans* (1)

hidden in Castle-forest—  
ball of cotton.

(2)

Castle—ball of  
cotton.

*Moby Dick* (1)

line—best hemp—tarred  
a little new manilla stronger  
more elastic 2·3" thick  
strain = 3 tons  
200 fathoms  
Coiled in tub stern—no  
kinks—danger  
(Engl. 2 tubs, American one)  
both ends exposed  
lower looped over tub side  
to fasten to another line  
or whale dives suddenly  
upper over oars to prow,  
pinned in chocks, festoon  
over bow, 20 fathoms coiled  
inside, fastened to short  
warp-harpoon rope  
encircles boat—lightning  
accidents, menace in repose  
—halter.

(2)

line manilla  
2·3" thick, 3 tons  
strain  
200 fathoms  
in tub stern—  
perfectly coiled  
lower end looped  
over tub side for  
joining, if need,  
or sudden whale dive  
upper over oars to  
prow, festoon over  
bow.  
20 fathoms coiled  
inside fastened har-  
poon rope  
all like huge halter.

There is no question here of rearrangement, as the order is fixed by the original. All one has to do is to compare each pair of examples with the original, and try to gauge their value alike as aids to memory and specimens of selective economy. They are given

merely in order to stimulate the making of similar experiments by the beginner.

### WRITTEN COMPOSITION

In practice, as has been seen, there is no sharp division between oral and written composition. They are complementary. But, so far, all the written composition suggested has been in some form of *précis*, something short, even when the theme has been a continuous whole of some length. I have not suggested, for example, the writing of an original or borrowed story. When the matter is of any length, it is matter for speech in the earlier years. I would not lay this down as a rigid observance, Heaven forbid ; but I would urge that effort be adjusted to capacity, and this would put a check on long written rigmaroles. If I wished for a written reproduction, I would not ask a boy for a full-length story ; if it was to test memory, I would read a short passage one day, and ask the class to write what they remembered of it, in their own words, on some later day, not known beforehand ; or if it was to be a test of penetration, I would dictate a short passage whose order had been changed, and ask them to rearrange it in such a way as they thought the sense required. For example, here are two such passages :

- (1) One day there lay before him a white snake, and he could not resist the temptation, as soon as he had carefully locked the door. Such a violent curiosity seized the servant who as usual carried the dish that he raised the cover and took the dish into his chamber.

- (2) If a dish of meat, such as curry, is to be added to flavour an onion, mince or rissoles already cooked, the dish should be boiled or when the rest of the onion is ready to be served, it will be still hard before it is cooked with the dish.

The original of (1) is :

One day such a violent curiosity seized the servant who as usual carried the dish that he could not resist the temptation, and took the dish into his chamber. As soon as he had carefully locked the door, he raised the cover, and there lay before him a white snake (Grimm, 'The White Snake').

The original of (2) is :

If an onion is to be added to flavour a dish of meat already cooked, such as curry, mince or rissoles, the onion should be boiled before it is cooked with the dish, or it will be still hard when the rest of the dish is ready to be served (Leyel and Hartley, *The Gentle Art of Cookery*).

The actual words of the original being in each case before them, the class can devote themselves to considering their order, and in so doing and in a critical comparison of their results with the original, they will have their minds focussed on something conveniently definite and sufficiently exacting.

But too confining and controlled, it may be thought. I do not mean such work as this to rule out a taste for spontaneous literary effort at any age. If a boy can be encouraged to write spontaneously and with freedom

on anything which interests him and touches his imagination, whether in the form of a story or a diary or a letter or a dialogue, so much the better. But that should be regarded as a matter for his own enjoyment, or trying-out the skill he has acquired ; or to make some communication of purely personal moment. Up to eleven or twelve conscious practice of detail is improbable : the boy subconsciously imitates. Whether he writes a line or a page, to please himself, his creative attitude will be the same in either case. But when conscious comparison with others and a need for technical efficiency compel him to attend to formal detail, then it will not help him to compose a story in order that he may improve his power of describing a single act, any more than painting a picture will help him to describe a particular curve with his brush, or rowing a race to practise slide control.

It is true that a story, as a written composition, has definite pointers to clarity and precision of meaning in its time and space conditions. But I seem to remember that with quite a simple set of circumstances a boy is capable of producing an account, of which this opening is typical : ' A man was driving a pig, he was going to sell it at the market. So it was a fat pig, and they were just going through the gates of a level crossing. It was about ten o'clock in the morning. Suddenly he heard—I forgot to say it was a bright morning and the sun was very dazzling. It was some time in June. Suddenly an engine whistled. . . . ' And so on for two or three pages, perhaps with more irregularity of spelling.

If he had not been bothered with plucking ideas out of apparently nowhere, he might have written : ' About ten o'clock one dazzling morning in June a man was driving a fat pig to market. Suddenly, when they were half-way over a level crossing, he heard the whistle of an engine.' This, at least, is a clear and simple sequence. He might have made one sentence of it, or he might have broken it up further, as for example : ' Ten o'clock. A dazzling June sun. A man driving a fat pig to market was half-way over a level crossing. Suddenly a whistle ! An engine !! ' A page or two of this kind of thing might be disastrous; but here also is a clear and simple sequence. And these attempts, unlike the first, are not likely to lead to such extravagances in later life as : ' Owing to the dazzling condition of the sun, which was one of the features of a bright June morning, a man, who was in the act of driving through the gates of a level crossing a fat pig destined eventually for sale at a market, was the victim of peculiar circumstances. . . . '

One can do without writing of this kind. Besides being inept, it is insincere ; it is either unaware of its obligations to a reader or merely cheats him. It breeds the type of mind which cannot understand such a sentence as ' Judge not, that ye be not judged ', but which is flattered because it cannot understand such a sentence as ' In your case any tendency towards censoriousness is a thing to be deprecated if not eliminated considering the possible development of similar tendencies in other quarters and their inevitable reactions on yourselves '.

This may be an over-statement of jargon ; but



jargon there is in plenty at the present day : partly due to the fact that the more knowledge is systematised, the more it needs special terminologies, and these are a great temptation to those who do not wish as direct an approach to truth as common language might give them. So valuable abstractions become weeds, and choke intelligence. Politicians decorate their micro-phones with them. Sentimental senility finds them an effective and inexpensive bouquet. Further, scientific research is forcing the pace very much at the moment for the human mind. For example, one may now fly round the world in a day or two. This shrinkage in space requires readjustments in mental outlook. Thought and feelings are alike implicated. One has to be ' air-minded '. It may be that this will involve the growth of a less imaginative and more insensitive being—as we know those terms. At any rate, if the mind is to retain coherence and consistency in the values it sets upon experience, it cannot make adaptations at the speed of a machine. It is still born of the soil. And while adaptations are being made, thought is at a crisis. It has to go through conflicts and confusions, muddles and obscurities.

In this crisis the printing machine is not altogether a help. It has also increased its speed ; and now goes so fast that the mind finds difficulty in supplying it with anything but material to keep it moving from day to day. Quantity rather than quality of words has become a first necessity.

Further, what may be called mass communication is becoming year by year more extensive ; and as what is communicated to a mass has not the sharply defined

concrete characters of that which is communicated to the individual, language is in danger of losing much of its power to represent or interpret reality.

The school, then, has a great responsibility—of course, in theory the school always has great responsibilities. They sound well ; and few are rash enough to believe in them. But if it abuses the function of written composition, it would do well to close all its doors.

As many business men insist—either from a sense of humour or because they do not know to what they are committing themselves—the written word should be a clear, precise, exact word. The great poet acts on that assumption. The written more than the spoken word is the guardian of clarity in thought. Two people may in conversation give words an unusual and temporary meaning, and understand each other perfectly, because they are able to translate their particular code by means of looks, voice and gestures. In writing, on the other hand, the words must themselves supply this sensitive exactitude of meaning, as nearly as possible. How difficult this is, a legal document will testify. It is written for readers whose professional training should enable them to read with the same eye. But when the written word conveys experience itself and not a specialised abstract from it, interpretation may vary with every reader ; and this, in one of our most permanent forms of expression, should make us set a high value on clarity. The clarity may be that of a fairy tale, a medical prescription or the lyrical suggestion of a state of mind.

Also, seeing how much the opinion of one age de-

depends on the permanent written record of another, it is as well that as many people as possible should be capable of supplying those records. History has been very much a prolonged distortion of fact, because capacity for communicating ideas in writing has been withheld from the majority, and a minority has profited by this. It is not enough that a clerk should be able to draft a business letter : he should be able, if he wished, to express his experience, as a human being, in prose worthy of it. It is not that one expects to rear a generation of writers ; but one does expect to rear a generation of readers who have experienced writing as an art and a discipline, and so are qualified, as none others, to test the value of what others write. To leave direction of the language to those whose first concern is to make a living out of it, whether they are members of literary, political or commercial circles, is like setting a fox to take care of chickens.

If, then, one hopes for a man of discernment, one should be careful not to drive him into a muddle while he is a boy. One wishes that the boy may, so far as possible, express what is in him, and not grow into a mere middleman of words ; but he can only give clear written expression to himself when he has had time to face the difficulties of the written word : its less personal atmosphere and absence of stimuli, which assisted speech ; its more strictly defined formal conditions ; the greater vocabulary needed for exact meaning ; the effect on words of their written context ; particular means of giving a necessary stress to important detail ; the suppression of the irrelevant.

So even in the simple written story, if there is a

threat of muddled sequence, I would suggest first that a boy should have practice in working with given words and then that he should in the structure of his story follow a given model. Give a boy such a list as ' engine, market, June, heard, pig, ten o'clock, gates, driving, dazzling, level, fat, alarm, morning, crossing, man, suddenly, whistle ', and it is most likely that he will enjoy putting them together as much as a jig-saw puzzle. Only here he has to supply his own picture, and a little verbal glue to join the pieces. But he has a definite set of ideas in front of him ; the strain of selection is removed ; he can concentrate on arrangement, and for this he must look sharply for potential meaning in the words, simple as these are. It is a first step towards clarity and away from jargon.

Or a list may be given under different parts of speech, as for example :

eyes, bough, wall, elm, mouse, night, cat,  
owl, grass—(nouns).

sit, crouch, watch, be—(verbs).

below, close by—(adverbs).

one, other, both—(pronouns).

yellow, glittering, green—(adjectives).

Here again the boy has to look for a pattern, but within defined bounds, and not in a possible chaos. The words given him obviously will not produce in themselves a coherent statement. There is nothing but the verbs to make clear the relations between the nouns. The boy will have to supply connections ; and he may add what ideas he thinks fit to those given ; but in assessing the results economy should be rated

high. He should be encouraged to make his arrangement in simple sentences : certainly, on his first attempt. Or in his effort to draw everything together he will probably run into such complexities as ' An owl and a cat, who were sitting one night on the bough of an elm and a wall close by, did not see each other, although the owl's eyes were glittering yellow and the cat's green, because they were both watching a mouse which was crouching in the grass below '.

This has the distinction of containing four types of clause ; and in the struggle to get them it has lost clarity and precision ; and what might be called, significant order. The attempt might as well not have been made.

As a first draft, in simple sentences, he might present : ' An owl was sitting one night on the bough of an elm. Close by a cat was sitting on a wall. One had glittering yellow eyes. The other had green eyes. They were both watching a mouse crouching in the grass below.'

This is direct. If it was then suggested that a natural order might be the darkness, the chief objects in the dark, the chief features of those objects, the action of those chief features, he might be able to rearrange his simple sentences somewhat as follows : ' It was night : an owl sat on the bough of an elm, and on a wall close by a cat, one with yellow, the other with green glittering eyes, both watching a mouse, which crouched in the grass below '.

The simple sentences have here been fused together, but at a stage in which some feeling for significant order might be expressed.

As long as a story is severely objective, and confined to the doings of persons whose appearance, character and motives can be taken for granted, one can venture to a certain length in writing without losing order and proportion ; but when appearance, character and motives cannot be taken for granted, the time has come for isolating and concentrating on detail. What is known as ' description ' involves at once one difficulty absent from narrative. Narrative has usually time and space to suggest an ordered structure ; description may have only space or mere qualities as its material. If you asked a boy to describe a journey by bus, he would not have much difficulty in deciding where to begin and in what direction to go with his pen. But if you asked him to describe a dog, he might be in some doubt whether to begin with the ears and work down to the paws, or with the muzzle and work back to the tail. He has to find some substitute for the comparatively simple time order ; and the finding of that substitute means a closer examination of words and their value than is possible in a long composition. Argument, reasoning for and against, provides one type of order ; but it can easily become confusion if the reasoning has no real contact with experience, and supposes a degree of intellectual capacity that is not there.

From twelve to fourteen I can think of no more valuable and interesting written exercise than the description of some simple object, perceived by the eye or ear. Not that this exercise is to be restricted to those ages ; it is of value at all times. I remember once a classical VIth primed with all the abstractions neces-

sary for gaining a scholarship, being asked one day to write a brief description of any horse they saw, so that anyone could go to a horse sale and by the description pick out the horse selected. The request was treated at first with polite scorn. A horse-dealer would have been amused at the results. I have tried the experiment with boys of sixteen. They find it interesting; but even after careful injunctions to depend on what they see, many boys feel safer if they can copy something out of a book. Ask them to put down just what a certain horse looks like, and they will, quite seriously, record that it is one of an order of quadrupeds, widely distributed over the earth's surface, etc. etc. They will, so long as the school does not recognise that the category 'things' actually contains things.

Only in all descriptive work the teacher should be also as much the learner as anyone else. It will be a source of pleasure to him; it may give him new points of view, and a new insight into the nature of his mind. If he tries himself to describe the flight of an owl, his subsequent comments on more serious subjects may have a little of the crispness of Bacon's 'Suspensions among thoughts are like bats. They love the twilight.' And apart from that, he will realise that certain things are more difficult to describe than others, and sit down to consider for what reasons; and so will observe a reasonable grading in his choice or suggestion of subjects. He would not, for example, consider that it was all one whether he asked a class to describe an iron gate or an empty street or a concrete-mixer or a van horse or a coal heaver or a weir or a human face or a character from life or a historical figure. Also, he might realise

that it is possible to provide for the future in making a selection of a subject. For example, the description of the colour of a dress in a picture, of the dress, of the picture as a whole, of two pictures on the same subject by different painters, of two pictures on similar subjects by the same painter, of a similar subject from living observation—all this may lead to an essay on the painter, in which critical judgments may not be all taken out of books, and taken even without an understanding of their meaning.

But to go back to the beginnings of description—I suggest that these should be, as it were, rapid sketches in two or three sentences, to seize the principal features of an object, and then by comparison and critical discussion of these sketches, to form a habit of selecting points for emphasis, where there is no obvious sequence, such as that of time. This is not to exclude the time sequence. Action takes place in time ; and at first, at any rate, it may be better to describe a thing engaged in specific action than at rest. There is less likelihood thus of vague general terms. Supposing for example that a boy has seen a kestrel, it would be better for him to describe a kestrel in flight than just a kestrel. The latter might tempt him to write that it was a largish brown bird, with a hooked beak, which fed on birds and mice and other small animals. So does an owl. But if he attempted to describe the kestrel in flight, and used his eyes, his eyes would help him to such sentences as, ‘ it climbs into the air straight up ; it hovers in the sky on outstretched quivering wings : for a moment it hangs stock still ; then drops ’. Here there is greater opportunity for the precise, because it is the most



satisfying word. There are four acts alone round which a verbal tussle is probable,—provided that it matters to a boy whether a bird flies upside-down or back-to-front or not. Such a tussle will increase his effective vocabulary far more than the memorising of handsome words, which have for him no particular context.

In this example the stress is on the vivid word concrete with suggestion, leading to the use of words to convey emotional meaning. It might be said that the vivid word is also the precise word ; but one needs practice in the use of the precise word, which is not necessarily vivid,—precise description of concrete objects, which will later induce precise definition of abstract ideas, which is itself actually the definition of abstract ideas, strictly conditioned by the presence of a concrete object. If you ask a boy to describe, for example, an unused test-tube, present in front of him, you will probably not expect him to describe an exact visual image in terms of light and shade of different shapes and texture ; nor will he probably think of describing it in that way, so as to distinguish it from a hundred other actual test tubes. To choose such an object with that aim in view would be unreasonable. The aim of his description is to distinguish precisely the genus test-tube from the genus flask or beaker or whatever it may be : if he put down his ideas on paper, as they came into his head, they would probably be of this type : glass—clear, smooth, stands heat : cylinder—hollow, narrow, open at one end, slight lip, closed and rounded at the other ; in other words, material and shape generic to all test-tubes. And the structure of

his description would rest on these common properties, not on individual points of emphasis. The language is that of logical identification, impersonal. A tendency to the same use of language would be found, if the class were to describe an unnamed object, each boy making his own choice, so that it could be identified by the rest. This kind of description is useful in that the stress is not on the expression of personal feelings but on the certainty of communication to others. It discourages wilful disregard of the reader.

Descriptive sketches, because they are brief, can have great variety of aim. The main aim is always to describe something ; but it will be soon found that the technical means are often inadequate. The fault may be anything from a weakness in syntax to ineffectual treatment of a desired simile : it may be clumsy ill-balanced order or failure to realise the full value of a word in a certain context. Attention can therefore be conveniently focussed on such defects as they become apparent. A description of an object can, without losing effect, be also an exercise in some detail of technique. And I think it is possible to go even further, and combine the written description with intensive analysis of models : provided that suitable models are found. If there is a real interest in the object described, it will extend also to the effort of others who have attempted to describe the same or similar things ; and, in consequence, their words will require close analysis. The motive is one of utility : the result may be admiration. And, in any case, the critical examination will be made by those who are trying to create something, as it were, out of their own

flesh and blood—always a difficult process,—and not merely assuming that they can judge whether what others have created is good or bad. And it is also possible that interest in what a poet has written on turnips may become later a point of contact with what he and others have thought and felt on other matters.

As definite examples in practice of what I mean, I suggest the following. They may seem too ambitious or too impracticable. I am only concerned that they should be a provocation to thoughtful practice. The objects chosen for description are all from the 'natural' world : this because I have found most boys at most ages take some interest in live-stock. But again, there are other objects of interest, though not all perhaps leading to the same expansive possibilities later. Suppose that the thing described is a butterfly—obviously not a winter lesson—and the class age to be about twelve. First orally various boys describe a butterfly according to their observation, the test for the description being that they are describing something unknown to the rest of the class. Key points in what they say are noted on the blackboard. Then if one can come across descriptions of a butterfly by naturalists—and this means a search into such writers as Darwin, Fabre, Jefferies, Hudson, White and so on,—these are read, and their key points also noted on the blackboard ; and from these a composite description of the butterfly is written up, as a thing distinct from a beetle or even a moth—in other words a definition. Comparison between this and the butterfly seen in a garden, public or private, or even the butterfly according to the naturalist, should make clear that, if a boy wishes

to make someone else see or feel just what he has seen or felt, where the sight of a butterfly has attracted him, he will need language other than that on the black-board. To say that the butterfly had glistening wings, or was graceful or light as a feather or was swift and silent at once, may seem to him a very weak and unsatisfying account of what he saw : even though it is less cold than the sentences on the board in front of him. If the teacher is skilful in conducting the comparison—that is, if he enables the boys to keep in touch with simple actualities within their understanding and power of analysis—they should realise that if they wish to give a special impression they will need special words : and not only realise this but also feel it is worth while troubling to give such an impression. Special words in describing a butterfly will then be the motif for the next lesson. That words become special, because they receive a certain quality from their context, or a certain emphasis from their order, though it may receive incidental reference, will require further lessons later for its thorough discovery.

The next lesson will begin with the reading of passages in which others have tried to give a special impression of the butterfly. I have taken two fragments, one from Bridges, the other from Browning :

- (1) ' While ever across the path mazily flit  
Unpiloted in the sun  
The dreamy butterflies  
With dazzling colours powdered and soft glooms,  
White, black and crimson stripes, and peacock  
eyes.'

- (2) ' On the rock they scorch  
Like a drop of fire  
From a brandished torch  
Fall two red fans of a butterfly.'

These fragments, as they are to serve as models, if for no other reason, should be read by the teacher with as much flexibility of tone and rhythm as seems likely to him to convey what the poet intended to convey by his words. In short, they should be well read. They may also be read aloud by selected boys, after they have been written on the blackboard, with as much care for spacing and lettering as a clever advertisement. And as they are written on the blackboard, they should also be dictated, the phrasing preserving the rhythm of the original, as it were, in slow motion : the boys taking down the words on rough paper, from which they should later copy them into a notebook. This notebook should be a small anthology, containing both ' models ' of this kind and also poems or selections from poems which have attracted the boy and are entirely his own choice. If there is any fear that these models may spoil the voluntary nature of this collection because they are dictated, it should be left to him to decide whether he includes them or not or which of them he includes, after they have been analysed. As much taste as possible should be shown in the spacing and lettering of such notebooks ; plain or coloured according to the boy's fancy. It might seem that this was making an artificially precious thing of the poem, like the association of virtue with Sunday clothes. But I think that to boys at any rate, and many other people

besides, unless a thing looks well, it does not seem worth their while attaching any value to it. Also though clean tools do not make an expert craftsman, no expert craftsman is content with tools badly kept. It may be that a boy will include trash in his own anthology, and this receive a false value from the skill and taste with which it is inscribed. But enthusiasm over what is worthless is better than indifference to what is good, as a basis even for critical austerity. By the time the fragments are read, dictated and written down, the class will be familiar with their details, and by the time they are analysed, it will know them by heart—at least I trust it is by heart, and not merely by rote ; otherwise the analysis will have failed. Once again it should be understood that the attitude towards analysis is to be that of those who, with a practical end in view, are looking for something that will be useful. For example, though in their description the boys will not be limited to any particular number of words, yet economy will be one of the aims attempted, and in connection with that, a practical question immediately arises : Could they, given the number of words in the original, have got as much meaning into them ? To answer this question, it is necessary first to find out how much meaning the words of the models contain ; and the best way of doing that is to put oneself, as far as possible, into the mind of the original writer—or to hover hopefully somewhere near it. The class will probably notice at once that there is emphasis on colour in both fragments. But colour is not the only point of emphasis ; and this will become clear as individual words are examined.

Seeing that the form of an oral analysis is a thing of very unstable elements, all I can do here is to suggest the kind of limits which personally I should expect the discussion to reach. The teacher's part in it will be obviously important. Unless he has some imaginative resource, and a certain Socratic ingenuity, the analysis may tumble into the first hiatus and stop there. Without controlling, he must sustain it.

In the first fragment, the rhythm and tonality of the lines seem to stress *mazily*, unpiloted, dreamy, powdered, soft glooms, and almost all the words in the last line. To take these words—they seem to fall into two groups, the first three lines concerned with movement, the last two with colour—the rhythm changing but still suggesting here and there the movement of the first three. *Mazily*, unpiloted, dreamy all in different ways suggest the same kind of movement. But how much meaning is, as it were, packed into each word. *Mazily* suggests going to and fro, like people threading their way through a maze, and it also has the sound of lazily; unpiloted, the movement of a ship or in these days an aeroplane—borne this way and that by tides; dreamy, either the conventional atmosphere of a smooth careless sleepy movement or that the butterfly is so casual in its flight that it appears to be doing it in its sleep or that its flight is like the random movements one feels in dreams. I do not say either that the poet was conscious of all these suggestions, probably not that of an aeroplane, or that the boys unaided would supply them all; but that the words are capable of these interpretations, and that as many meanings should be explored as possible. For the important

thing for the boy to feel convincingly for himself is that here in three words taking their place modestly as adjuncts to other parts of speech, there is packed meaning which it takes over seventy words to explain. They have, as it were, the energy of seventy ; and together they concentrate that energy on giving us a clear impression of a certain movement. This metaphor is not intended for age twelve. Nor in this lesson is rhythm made a particular topic : that is for another.

To continue—powdered ; some people might consider ‘ painted ’ would do as well ; but a boy interested in butterflies would correct that idea. He could show how precisely chosen the word powdered is : even to the suggestion of a too free use of the powder-pot. Soft glooms suggests soft shadows. Then why not shadows or shades ? It might be the opinion of some boys that shadows does not fit so well into the sound of the line, or that shades is a word which does not necessarily convey the idea of dark, and as dazzling is contrasted with soft, so colour requires a contrast. Possibly a boy with a shrewd eye for the wings of a butterfly might suggest that the word gloom has a velvety sound (at least in its combination with the consonant sounds in soft). Here it is the precision of the word, relative to the thing observed, which is important to note.

‘ Peacock eyes ’, like the whole of the Browning fragment, is a more obvious example of the use of resemblances, latent in the words already examined. One is not concerned here with the recognition of metaphors and similes ; but rather with finding a reason for the poet’s use of words apparently out of their proper reference. Peacock eyes, scorch, drop of



fire, torch, fans, all these have very definite meanings ; they suggest not many ideas, but each, if one excludes electric torches and fans, one definite idea, and not one of these has logically anything to do with a butterfly ; unless Bridges in his poem is thinking of two kinds of butterfly only, one the peacock butterfly. In that case, the naturalist who invented that name did the illogical borrowing. He saw a wing which was decorated with spots of one colour ringed with a circle of another colour—an ocellated wing. He needed an abbreviation for this idea ; all he could do was to borrow a word which already had a definite meaning, and so by reminding his reader of the second thing describe the first. It could not be an exact description. But Bridges in using it felt that it was exact enough and gave in two words a picture as clear and vivid as he had given in ' white, black, and crimson stripes '. One might say he was describing an insect, then why describe part of a bird ? The answer to that is to try and think of two or more words which would give a clearer, more exact and more satisfying impression of the different circular markings on a butterfly's wing. The other poet, Browning, is describing a red butterfly settling on a rock. He might have said that a butterfly of a very brilliant red colour hovered up and down over a rock, then alighted and shut its wings with great suddenness. He would be using about the same number of words. But would those words spoken aloud give as clear and vivid an impression of something happening as those he used ? One would answer that better after reading them both aloud. Like Bridges, he wants to give an impression of movement

and colour, very intense colour and very exact movement. The mere statement 'a very brilliant red' evidently did not satisfy him. It failed to give the intense red of a thing with light in it; just as the red out of a box of paints will not glow on paper like a piece of red glass with a lamp behind it. To get a glow, one needs fire of one kind or another. But the butterfly being in movement, Browning wanted also an idea that would give the impression of a brilliant glow whirling about; he thought then of a drop of fire tossed from a torch—there he had intense movement and intense colour: though a drop of fire suggests molten metal and molten metal is not usually found in torches. And that may certainly be a blemish in the description. Then he evidently wanted to give the impression of instantaneous stillness—the suddenness with which a butterfly shuts its wings: something open one moment, shut the next: something also of light dainty structure. He hit on the idea of a fan, a red fan. Certainly a fan does not shut as suddenly or noiselessly as a butterfly's wings; and altogether the closing of a fan and the scorching of fire flung from a torch may seem much too violent and confusing an idea to give a satisfactory impression of a butterfly's movement. Browning, as very often, showed himself insensitive and inartistic in his choice of sounds and rhythm; and in his desire to get an intense emotional effect strains the patience of the reader, to whom a quieter and more 'oblique' communication would convey more of reality. And if in the course of analysis boys in their own way express discontent with the fitness of Browning's description, so much the better: provided that it comes from them

as people wanting and making an effort to create a more fitting description. Then in their effort to substitute something better, they would realise its difficulties and give Browning credit for his effort. For example, they would realise that a drop of molten metal flung through the air does cause the eye to notice it with more of a thrill than it would notice a scrap of red paper. They would probably have enough imagination to know that they would like to see it happen twice. From their observation they should know that it is very difficult, unless one is alert, to say how a butterfly's wings are open, how shut : the movement being almost instantaneous, as well as graceful. To find an idea that will suggest vividly such a happening, is not easy. And they should be encouraged to try and find one. Whether they discover something that appeals to many as more satisfactory or not, they will not need to be told that the words they have been examining, are economical ; that they express a good deal in a short space, and are not insignificant. It may be suggested that in describing anything they may get nearer to a description which seems to put the object itself on the paper, if they spend time choosing words of that kind.

And they may try a description on paper ; at first, of something for which they may borrow words, if necessary, and at least, the way of treating the subject from the models ; a butterfly, for example, over a pond. Whether this is deferred to the next lesson will depend on the length of the oral analysis. In turn, these descriptions will be the basis of a fresh analysis which will probably disclose points of composition needing special attention, and some of these may show on what

points the stress of the next analysis of models should fall. In the meantime the class may attempt a description of something, other than a butterfly, of their own choice.

Supposing that in the course of these lessons interest had coalesced on the rhythm of the words used, that boys had attempted rhythm in their descriptions, it might be useful to vary one's descriptive work on some such lines as the following. Take this statement: 'As I trudged by the river under a hot sun, I saw a trout moving in the water near a patch of sedge and a wagtail drinking among the stones by the bank, and I envied them'. After this is read to the class, they might describe on paper what was seen by the walker, and describe it in such a way that to a hot and thirsty man would suggest just the two things he might envy. They have two actions to describe, a trout moving in the water and a wagtail drinking among the stones: and they have two ideas to emphasise, the opposites to what the man feels, namely, heat and thirst. After they have described what they could, then out of their suggestions and with the help of the teacher's inventiveness, a 'fair copy' would be written on the blackboard. Suppose this was: 'A silver trout slipped lazily in and out a cool shadowy patch of sedge, and a wagtail hopped by the bank among the chill pebbles and tippled the silvery ripples down its bill'. Here they might look for the words which were intended to make the man feel the difference between himself and what he saw. They are silver (a cool colour), slipped, lazily (easy movement), cool, shadowy, hopped (liveliness of movement), chill, tippled, ripples (thirst-

quenching). Picked on thus, these words may seem to have even more force than in the continuous sentence. There they may seem to tread too much on each other. Is it possible, then, to find an order for them, in which they each stand out more clearly? This attempt would probably be mostly made by the teacher. I omit the incidental comment to this suggested order, but its aim should be apparent, namely, to give the important words a clear space round them. It runs thus:

A lazy,  
Cool  
And silvery trout  
Slipped  
Through the water in and out  
A patch of sedge,  
Cool shadowy sedge,  
And by the bank  
A wagtail  
Hopped and drank  
Among the pebbles chill,  
Tippling the silvery ripples  
Down its bill.

As to write in this way is rather heavy on paper, or on blackboard space, it may be written so as to occupy less space, as: A lazy, cool and silvery trout slipped through the water in and out a patch of sedge, cool shadowy sedge, and by the bank a wagtail hopped and drank among the pebbles chill, tippling the silvery ripples down its bill'. But if this is compared with the first fair copy, the class may notice that in spite of being written continuously, the words run in a different way.

If three boys read the first copy, and three the second, it would probably be clear that the three who read the second, read it more in one order than the three who read the first. The words themselves compel it. Certain sounds repeat themselves at set intervals, and both these and others catch the emphasis, as they are read : these words are those which contain the ideas conveying the things to be envied by a hot and thirsty man. And not only this, but it might become noticeable to the class that the words had more of a pattern of sound, that you could beat time more easily to them. If they do not suggest it, it should be suggested to them. But whether they feel that this pattern makes what is said more real, is another matter. To that there is no enforceable answer. One may help them—it is only may—to gain such a critical impression by adding other examples for comparison. To take one that is moderately simple. In these lines :

‘ Toll the bells, toll for the brave,  
The brave that are living no more,  
For now they are sunk all under the wave  
Of the sea by their own native shore ’,

is the run of the words well matched with the sense ? Or if there is a doubt about this, take this version (on the model of ‘ I’m such a silly when the moon comes out ’—*Our Miss Gibbs*) :

‘ Toll every minute for the brave who are  
Sunk in the water and can live no more,  
Dying and lying  
Beneath the water flowing  
By the tideways of the British shore.’

Is the run of the words here slow and solemn ? Do they suggest a bell tolling, a bell which sends out a long echoing note, then is silent for a while, then rings out again, then is silent again, and so slowly, as long as it is tolled ? If the words wish to give the impression of a tolling bell, does one expect them to sound packed together, tumbling over each other as they are read, or to have space between them, silences ? Let the class take the first version and see whether they can cut the words down in each line, so that, while the sense remains the same, and each line ends with the same word as on the blackboard, important words, or what they consider to be important words, have plenty of time for their sound to reach the ears. And also let them remember that a bell tolls at an even pace. There may be little variations in the time at which the ringer pulls the rope, and breezes in the air may make one note seem a little longer or one silence between the notes a little shorter than another. And they can make such variations, and change words for that purpose, provided they do not change the sense too much.

When their scraps of paper have been collected and glanced through, the best of them may be read along with Cowper's version, and some of the boys may then realise, that is, feel as well as think, that the rhythm of his plain words has solemnity in it,—and this allowing for differences between what is solemn for one individual and what for another.

After this one or two versions of the trout and the wagtail may be put on the board for comparison of rhythm, as for example :

- (1) A lazy, cool silvery trout  
Through the water slipped in and out  
A patch of cool shadowy sedge,  
Close to the bank  
A wagtail which hopped on the pebbles  
Drank,  
Tippling with its bill  
Ripples both silvery and chill.
- (2) A lazy trout,  
A cool and silvery trout  
Slipped through the water in and out  
A patch of shadowy sedge,  
And by the water's edge  
A wagtail hopped among the pebbles chill,  
Tippling the silvery ripples down its bill.
- (3) In and out,  
In and out  
Slipped a cool and silvery trout  
By a patch of sedge,  
Cool and shady sedge,  
Gliding through the water cool.  
By the bank,  
By the bank  
There a wagtail hopped and drank  
Round the pebbles chill  
With its busy bill  
Tippling silvery ripples cool.

And the original version,

- ' A lazy, cool and silvery trout  
Slipped through the water in and out



A patch of sedge,  
Cool shadowy sedge ;  
And by the bank  
A wagtail  
Hopped and drank  
Among the pebbles chill,  
Tippling the silvery ripples down its bill.'

These the class may first read to themselves, that is, forming the sounds in their mind and even with their lips without uttering them ; and then they may be read aloud, and the class make a choice, taking their own time, each boy deciding which version he would prefer to copy out on paper. For their next description they might try such a subject as ' Trees in a Wind ' or ' A Train entering a Tunnel '.

It may be felt that in such lessons as these, what appreciation there is may be of an artificial and unnatural kind ; that the machinery for its production is too cumbersome and very much—machinery ; that a better result could be obtained by reading poems without comment and giving boys instructions in simple prosody. Let them have such reading and such lessons, by all means. Boys like the certainty of putting down rhymes of a poem as *a, b, a, b, c, c*. And everything which invests a poem with pleasure and interest cannot be neglected. But there is need of experiment in English, and before a critic condemns any suggestion in method, he should at least attempt to put it to a practical test.

In this type of exercise, and its adaptations for any age up to sixteen, the main stress is on description, as a means of increasing the technical ability necessary

to share one's simplest ideas. The difficulties and pleasures of that process seem to me to be the most congenial atmosphere for the early growth of critical appreciation. However, if a teacher does not feel inclined or able to pursue the subject into so much detail, he had better read to the class, or if it is too young to understand them, explain in as simple words as possible two passages from Wordsworth and leave it at that. They are :

- (1) (in reference to Sir Walter Scott) 'He took pains, he went out with his pencil and notebook and jotted down whatever struck him most. He went home and wove the whole together into a poetical description. . . . He should have left his pencil and notebook at home, fixed his eyes as he walked with reverent attention on all that surrounded him . . . then after several days had passed by, he should have interrogated his memory as to the scene. He would have discovered that while much of what he had admired was preserved to him, much was also wisely obliterated ; that which remained—the picture surviving in the mind—would have presented the ideal and essential truth of the scene, and done so in a large part by discarding much, which though it is striking was not characteristic.' (Excellent advice.)
- (2) 'Imagination has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects, but is a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind upon those objects.'

Such a teacher could claim that he was doing no damage ; that he was not imposing the constraint of his own intelligence on the boys' imagination, conscious upon subconscious ; that traffic to the imagination must not begin with petty inspection at its ports. He could claim no better attitude—provided that it was not a screen for indifference or incompetence.

### A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE CLASSICS

In the last ten or twenty years individual teachers, intelligent and original, have by their methods stimulated the pre-adolescent boy to greater self-expression and to a great capacity for assimilating others' ideas and expression. *Play Way* methods, for example, have been increasingly practised, with results which are often astonishing. A boy of twelve writes verse, which as a grandfather he may ascribe to the leading poet of the day. This is all to the good. Everything that makes for expansiveness of mind in the young is most valuable. But equally valuable is everything that will make for expansiveness of mind in the adult,—young, middle-aged, and old. And in spite of the existence of new methods, there is evidence enough in present mentality to make one think either that these methods have not spread as far as is sometimes supposed or that they are not enough in themselves to guarantee a mind which will not consent to become a mere commonplace, a mere limit in an externally controlled mechanism of ideas, a herd mind, a thing to be imposed on.

It may be that expansive work up to fourteen needs

the confirmation of work which, in a sense, confines the mind for the next year or two—so far as the school is concerned. I do not wish to be misunderstood. Perhaps confine is an unfortunate word. It suggests those various devices with which school authorities have inflamed without sustaining the imagination of the adolescent, and supplied cunning half-truths in place of free and healthy thought. I mean rather that discipline of language and thought which was and is given by the classics to the middle school; and I would say once again that unless the English course can give that, it will be lacking both in power and interest. I am not concerned here with arguments for or against a disciplinary theory of education. When I use the terms discipline of language and thought, as given by the classics, I am thinking of discipline in the mother tongue. Thought, in so far as it escapes words, is beyond any arguments. The great actual value of the classics has been their great technical or linguistic training in the use of English. This was reserved in the past for a small minority of the nation. The modern school, which has other claims on it than producing the academic type, cannot provide that linguistic training through the classics. It may find that it is advisable to retain with all its boys up to sixteen one ancient language for purposes of linguistic comparison. Latin seems to be the most convenient by reason of its structural unlikeness to English. But for most boys the linguistic standard reached in it will not be high. That does not matter, provided that the methods of learning English can supply the place of those used in learning the classics. A knowledge of Latin, then, even

though for the majority it will not be that of a scholar, will suffice for valuable comparisons.

Can the English course between fourteen and sixteen supply what was provided by the processes of translation in the classical curriculum? If it can, it will supply what is essential to most minds at that age. Translation, whether from Latin or Greek into English, or from English into Latin or Greek,—which reserves to itself the title of composition,—is a process which subjects meaning to strict conditions. In competent hands it creates a feeling for precision, a distaste for being readily satisfied with more or less approximations. In one type of translation one is faced with a succession of strange words which contain a meaning. To find that meaning, one has to note their exact grammatical form and relations, and by memory, reasoning or imagination to construct the meaning of the verbal context from one's knowledge of the individual terms. When the translation is from one's own to the ancient language, one has to find a pattern of words which will interpret the sense of the original; it may need many attempts before a pattern can be found which will convey under a new form the same meaning as the original, and all the time the mind is being explored for suitable words: and these examined singly and in groups to see how they will satisfy the grammatical and logical conditions of the required arrangement. So in arriving at the precision of meaning necessary for translation, the boy has a stimulus to the understanding of grammatical structure, logical continuity and co-ordination of ideas, varied means of expressing a required emphasis, idiosyncrasies of single words; in short, he is intro-

duced to a precise and supple use of language under conditions in which, though he does not invent the original material, he must supply a certain originality of interpretation.

It may be said that this process of translation has little interest for many boys. They sicken of work in which they see no utility. It is true that at this age they like to be sure of the utility value of a subject—though their judgments of value may be hasty and limited—but of all parts of classical study these sceptics probably find more interest in translation than in any other, because they are actually discovering something about an unknown quantity and so satisfying their curiosity. Where lack of interest is marked, it is usually due to the fact that the language is too difficult for them. But this is less likely to happen with English.

One other objection to applying methods of classical study to English might be that the classics tend to produce the type of mind which divorces the word from reality, and conveniently fritters away a live world in terms of dead authority. It is true that there have been many classical pedants who would have done better to have planted, hoed and lifted potatoes ; and a classical culture has formed an imposing balustrade from which the acquisitive could glance securely on disorder. But to trace these defects to the study of precise thought between the ages of fourteen and sixteen is rather misleading. And there are two natural safeguards against pedantry in an English as contrasted with a classical course. The one is the fact that outside school, at any rate, the boy is using his own

language in real earnest, probably for the first time—I mean that he is beginning to compare his use of it for practical purposes with that of adult society round about him. The other safeguard is the fact that he is not only comparing his language but his scope of experiences with that of the adult world, and while at one moment he may retreat into a private citadel of emotions, fancies and ideals, at another he is pressing out to what seems to him most real in his social and material environment. His real may be no more than that which is most obvious to the senses. But at such times he is not likely to admire blindly the sanctity of the merely formal. He may welcome a formalised interpretation of experience, as a member of a social group—the class ; where a more direct interpretation might seem to threaten his emotional privacies.

Further, to raise the issue of pedantry may obscure an issue more relevant to this age. Besides receiving a welter of impressions from outside, the boy intellectually is already in search of some system into which he may fit parts, at least, of his experience. It may be with some boys a search at a snail's pace, and with less persistence. But he borrows generalisations, even if he does not discover them : he is after causal explanations : he wants to know why phenomena recur and on what plan : he has scientific tendencies. To investigate order in language should be one of them.

Translation, in the special sense, is obviously not a process which can be initiated literally in a single language to any great extent. ' Paraphrasing ' may be taken as a form of it ; useful but also dangerous, if the transference of meaning from one set of words to

another is not controlled by a very clear purpose. To turn 'the quality of mercy is not strained' into 'mercy is spontaneous' (assuming that the boy knows what he means when he writes the word 'spontaneous') is not a beautiful conversion; and not at all profitable, unless there is some clear reason for the uglier change, as for example to substitute Pecksniff for Portia.

Nearer to 'translation' would be the paraphrasing of language whose form has become obsolete or has not yet become familiar; of such different types, for example, as

'With mony bryddes unblythe upon bare twyges  
That pitorly ther piped for pyne of the colde'

and

'The end of aldest mocest ist the beginning of all  
thisorder so the last of their hansbailis shall be  
the first in our sheriffsby.'

But it is obvious that a modern language would be a convenient substitute for the first type; and the second type would be too difficult, except as an exercise in discovering what is its grammatical structure, and not what is its meaning. To get the benefit which 'translation' gives, it is not necessary to copy slavishly the particular form of the process used in translating a word from one language to another. In the very simple sentence '*Amat arator terram*'—supposing that we take the meaning to be, 'the ploughman is in love with the earth'—to find their meaning, a boy has to note (1) the grammatical connection between the words; (2) the selection of meanings for individual words according to the context; (3) the effect of their order



on their meaning. He sees (1) that *amat* is a verb in a certain voice, mood, tense, etc. ; *arator* a noun in a certain case, and so on : then (2) while for *arator* he has a fixed meaning, *amat* may represent certain degrees of love, from a liking to a passion, *terram* may be earth, soil, ground, country ; and he makes a combination which seems most appropriate for his subject *arator* ; then (3) the original translation ' the ploughman is in love with the earth ' would correspond equally well or rather better to the words '*arator terram amat*'. In the order '*Amat arator terram*'—if the voice does not give an emphasis of its own,—the stress falls particularly on *amat* and *terram*. *Amat* by its position suggests the idea that someone is in love—here a ploughman. So the sense of *amat* is something more than mere liking : and the expectancy raised by *amat arator* is that he is probably in love with a girl. So *terram* by its final position in the sentence receives a double stress, and the translation ' the ploughman is in love with the earth ' may fail to give the whole meaning.

Now, these three types of activity can be given a boy in other than a Latin-English translation lesson. For example : (1) He can analyse an English sentence to find its syntactical structure. It will be syntax more than accident which will engage his attention there, and so much the better. Undoubtedly he will understand more about the essentials of syntax if he can make a comparative study of two languages of different types as, for instance, Latin and English. But even if he knows English only, he will find plenty of analytical exercise in such a sentence as ' Thence to Whitehall,

and walked long in the gardens till as they are commanded to all strange persons, one come to tell us, we not being known, and being observed to walk there four or five hours, which was not true, unless they count my walking there in the morning, he was commanded to ask who we were ; which being told, he excused his question and was satisfied '. (2) He can select words to give an exact context of meaning in a descriptive lesson, in which the presence of the thing described is a condition enforcing precision ; and as the meaning of each word in a sentence is relative to the meaning of the whole sentence, so is that of the sentence to the paragraph, and that of the paragraph to the whole, of which it is a part. And in ' translation ', the mind often ranges over a paragraph, sometimes over the whole statement, hoping that by following the sequence of ideas and getting the gist of the whole it may fix the meaning of particular words. In this exercise the mind is constantly changing the focus at which it views the matter : and that is the value of it. But, as I have suggested before, this same exercise is to be found in *précis*. And (3) the effect of order on meaning through variation of emphasis may be practised in the English sentence itself : so also the effect of figures of speech and fashions of speech reflecting different attitudes of mind, of which more later. For the moment, to take the simple sentence already used, ' the ploughman is in love with the earth ', and ask a boy to express that same idea in half a dozen different ways, would give as much exercise of this third kind as the translating of the Latin. Suppose, for example, that he produces the following :

It is the earth the ploughman loves.  
The ploughman has a passion for the earth.  
The soil is the ploughman's delight.  
The ploughman's pleasure is earth.  
With the earth the ploughman is in love.  
Of the earth the lover is a ploughman.  
The ploughman has to like the earth.

In sorting and valuing which in these is the best reproduction of the original, and in giving reasons for the estimate, there is plenty of scope for all concerned to translate their ideas this way and that in aiming at precision of meaning : and not in an uninteresting way, for there is partial origination, not too much to make the whole effort too difficult and distracting, and yet enough to make the analysis, as it were, an alien function.

At this point some may think that in proposing something apparently new I have recoiled to something deeply embedded in a traditional rut of English teaching : I have dangled the virtues of classical translation before the eye ; and the eye, looking at them fixedly, sees nothing there but old spectres—analysis, paraphrasing, reproduction, précis,—names wreathed with the cobwebs of examining spiders, nearly a century old.

It is true that these names have been inadvertently caricatured by the answers of countless examinees. But that is only because unintelligent teachers have thought that if they learned a methodical routine appropriate to each of them, they need not consider what particular aim they had in using any of these verbal

processes. In themselves, they are obviously terms so comprehensive that there can be no treatment of language which can avoid reference to them. But it makes a great difference whether one regards *précis*, for example, as a means of assembling evidence about an author's views on a debated point or as a short way of saying, count the number of words in a passage, put a pencil through two-thirds of them and the rest into reported speech, if they are not there already. The one is a creative act, the other is not.

The shortest way I can suggest to retrieve all these familiar terms from their undesired past is to regard them as nothing but means by which one can see how the mind of a writer works. To become familiar with what an author has written, whether he is poet or statistician, through trying to find out how his mind worked when he was writing, together with constant attempts in writing oneself to use the knowledge thus gained, this seems to be the most likely way of producing a discipline of precise thought at this age. In doing it one paraphrases, reproduces, curtails and expands, translates, analyses structure *in toto* and in part, syntax and sense. It must be the work of the teacher to devise means whereby the whole process of seeing how one comes to use certain ways of arriving at the expression of one's meaning, may be as active as if the class were in a studio watching an artist—or a sign painter—construct a picture, and at every stage were able to question him on his methods, and make him, much as he disliked it, come to a conscious explanation of his work, and then see what results they could produce, following similar principles.

What in practical procedure are these means to be ? I will try to suggest some possible methods of procedure.

One is out for precision of meaning, whether it is of the type 'the properties of true compounds are invariable as is the ratio of their constituents', or of the type 'I do here walk before thee like a sow that hath overwhelmed all her litter but one', or 'daffodils That come before the swallow dares and take The winds of March with beauty'. Whatever the type, one cannot get much clarity of detail if the whole structure of one's thought is awry. Incoherence in outline must lead to a blur in detail—even where the detail taken from its setting may appear brilliant.

Formerly one set a boy to write an essay on 'Manners maketh Man' or 'Martial Law'—now one suggests as a theme 'Street Noises' or 'Traffic Signals' as being nearer to his observation and experience. But one is inclined still to forget that whatever the theme, he will be confronted by a greater or smaller number of groups of ideas : and whatever the theme, though these may seem coherent within the group, there will probably be a most disconcerting lack of continuity between one group and another. They may all seem in a vague way to have something to do with the matter in hand ; but which is to come first, and for what reason, and if there seems to be an obvious first, in what order are the rest to follow it, and how that order is to be not merely a sequence but a rational coherence—all these questions present a very hostile and stubborn face to the boy ; and unable to meet them, he lets his pen scrawl on, and his pen, unlike the proverbial old

horse, cannot find its way home. Groups of ideas are rather like starry nebulae. Even if they are visible, they are a mere muddle, unless the eye which sees them is controlled by a selective aim. Then they move into a pattern.

One may say that if a boy has a motive for writing on something, he will have no difficulty with selection. He will certainly have less difficulty ; but out of ten boys, free to write on what they like, how many, though they have a wish to write on a topic of their own choice, will have a clear aim also, a clearly defined attitude towards the topic, a realisation of some clear impression they wish to convey. One or perhaps two. It is the remainder who have a special need of the school.

How selection of material depends on having an aim may be illustrated by constructing skeletons ; and I should say this work, done orally and with the black-board for the evolving diagram or epitome, would be useful especially when a boy is beginning to write on more abstract topics, and reasoning about phenomena is being added to description of the concrete. A boy should have at least a dozen oral lessons in skeleton construction. As long as the theme is of a serial nature, there will be an obvious clue to its structure, and it may seem that the selection of material for it does not rest very much on having any particular aim. For example, ' preparing the soil for a crop of carrots ', ' mending a puncture ', ' a day's fishing ', ' a sea bath ', ' the school hall ', ' a railway bridge '—in the first two of these there is a definite order of events which not only provides a structure but is also to a certain extent selective of material. But one can treat ' the mending

of a puncture ' as the catalogue of a process or the recording of an experience. If the latter, the purpose for which the record is made will have a selective effect on the material. It may be the record of a mood, and one mood may recognise the inclusion of one set of operations, and another another. Again, a day's fishing may be the diary of day's acts ; but the selection of what action to stress, what to omit, will be governed by an attitude of mind, with consequent effect upon the structure of what is written. This is still more evident in writing on ' a sea bathe '. In these four themes the subject is or may be the record of personal action, and so what is written a reconstruction, an easier thing than providing a structure for something not previously experienced. ' The school hall ' may be a familiar setting to one's activities, but it is not those activities themselves, and so does not suggest so easily a structure for one's thoughts. But the eye comes to their aid : as it travels from one object to another, it provides an order for their recording, and by means of its blind spot a manner of selection. But this is not a very discriminating way of selecting, and the result is as likely as not to be a formless confusion. The eye to be discriminating must be subject to an attitude of mind. Such an attitude may be given it, for example, by supposing that it belongs to a particular type of visitor to the school, or to a particular type of boy. It might seem obvious that the writer himself was a particular type of boy. But when it comes to writing, he is very little conscious of the fact ; and he finds it easier to write from the angle of an individuality other than his own, probably because he can bring an imaginary

character to a sharper focus than his own straggling self—unless he is preternaturally introspective. But, though writing in the person of someone else may help a boy to find a definite structure of thought for himself, it can become a fault. To suggest every time that a description should be written, as if you were so-and-so or such-and-such, is evading an issue the boy has to face. He must sooner or later find his own selective purpose in writing. And in oral skeleton lessons a possible variety of approaches can be suggested without their being anything more than indirect suggestions or diminishing a boy's independence of choice.

The teacher who has difficulty in finding a structure in his own written thoughts need not despair of being able to delineate a skeleton composition on the black-board. Suppose that he finds boys in the habit of marshalling ideas as firstly, secondly . . . lastly, the numbers being merely group-marks but through their arithmetical appearance suggesting some fictitious coherence between the groups : as for example—if ' maps ' is the theme, and they write down : (1) Ordnance—their accuracy ; (2) Motor—helpfulness on journeys ; (3) Marine—to prevent accidents—risks in making them ; (4) Military—eye for artillery—the air-photograph : or if ' roads ' is the theme and they write down : (1) Their value in peace ; (2) do. in war ; (3) conclusion, and expand this as :

(1) *a.* Main roads—their use for communication and commerce.

*b.* By-roads—their use for communication and commerce.



- c.* Rail roads—their influence on population and commerce.
- d.* Water-ways—their disuse.
- (2) *a.* Military roads—old and new.
- b.* Rail roads in war—artillery, etc.
- (3) The future development of roads.

Let the teacher take even such schemes as these as a basis ; and in considering these false numerical substitutes for order and the real chaos of thought they may disguise, he may notice certain things ; for example, that the first scheme really suggests a very comprehensive use of maps by mankind. Remove them, and man would not only lose his way but a good deal else besides. Here at least is a definite attitude to the subject emerging. The aim, then, is to explore this attitude and if it still holds good, impress it on others. The attitude suggests that the map may be a very precious thing. If that is so, how can that be made convincing ? If one has happened to see a mediaeval manor map, one may see there a key point for the proposed structure. But I cannot be more specific about the development ; it varies with the individual : only perhaps it may be seen that with the emergence of our aim there is an approach to a coherent structure. In the scheme on Roads, the teacher may first be impressed by the fact that it should not have been set as a theme. It urges diffuseness. The scheme has attempted—weakly, it is true—to set a bound to the subject by suggesting, as its third main section, a conclusion—‘ the future development of roads ’. The boy has realised that a conclusion should be an intrinsic part of his scheme.

That is to the good. But as his first two sections suggest nothing but a dreary infinity, his final section has no clue to an end. What impression is this going to make on a reader ? The same as if he were asked to start from nowhere and go through an interminable fog to nowhere.

The faulty nature of the theme as a theme, at least, should suggest a sharp need for a definitive nucleus. If the teacher were a painter with four square feet of canvas in front of him, and the not impossible subject of roads in his mind, the first thing he would have to realise was that whatever he might have in his mind, he has only a certain space available for its expression ; and then that if in filling that space he did not produce some kind of shape, which most eyes could recognise as a shape, he would fail to make any impression at all, either for another's approval or condemnation. Of course, there is a difference in the reception of the written and painted pattern. The latter is all visible at a first glance to a sensitive eye : the former, even to the quickest eye, is not an instantaneous but a gradual impression ; the pattern, though paragraph by paragraph it reveals that it is a pattern, does not reveal what pattern it is until the eye reaches the last written words. And this affects the structural design throughout. But the fact remains that in the development of the written subject there are formal conditions operative no less than in that of the painting : for example, if an introduction to the particular treatment of a subject, the staking-out, as it were, of the scope of the essay, is disproportionate to the actual treatment itself, in many readers there will be a falling-off of interest or a shock

of disappointment when there should be a feeling of conviction.

I do not say that because one can divide an essay into a beginning, middle and end, and because there may be ratios between these which should be observed if the subject is to have most favourable reception from the reader, therefore these formal conditions are most selective of the particular structure of the essay. The most selective factor is one's aim. But, to return to the topic of roads,—as in painting a painter is limited to the number of roads he can put on his canvas, not merely by the size of the canvas but by the probable reception by the eye, so the writer must be guided by the extent of his paper and the satisfying of a sense of direction in his reader. Such satisfaction, it may be said, comes through the meaning of the words. But one can introduce a topic with very cogent, logical or emotive power, and destroy all sense of continuous direction by allowing the introduction to be the main item of emphasis in one's treatment of the topic. Supposing, for example, that the painter chooses to take one road as the most suitable medium for expressing what he feels about roads, and supposing that of all the characteristics of a road he wishes to impress on the eye its power of connecting a variety of distantly separated points, and he then fills his canvas with a dozen granite setts meticulously solid and expressive of durability and weight, he would express something relevant to his main intention, but he would not express that main intention itself ; and it is most likely that this failure to realise his aim would make even the selection of detail in what was to be a subsidiary impression less effective

than it might be. It would be the same with a writer who with the same intention spent 400 out of a total of 500 words on a minute description of road construction.

The teacher, then, having from the boy's essay a warning against diffuseness and, one hopes, from his experience of form in some other art, a warning against neglecting some kind of proportion, may, like the painter, decide to select a particular road as a backbone to his structure, and, through that particular road, convey what he feels to be the acme of roadiness. On second thoughts, he may, in order to impress his reader, begin by an unnamed particular road and end by revealing it as a well-known road stretching away into an impressive distance both of space and time. Further, since the choice of a particular road has to be made subject to the title, even though the essay begins with a graphic description of incidents on a road, these incidents have to be characteristic of what a road is. What, in the particular, is characteristic of the typical road? It is a connection between places, near and distant—a purposed connection—for vital exchanges—of goods and people—a solid connection, enduring, a sum of human effort—of ants struggling with the earth—a continuum of activity in apparent rest—a contrast with its surroundings—an artificial thing in natural variety—a place of constant meetings and separation—a thing itself of varying character.

Here is a bundle of characteristics; evidently in themselves without much suggestion of structure: characteristics which, according to their relative emphasis, could contribute to distinct differences in interpretation. The relative emphasis depends on the attitude of the writer.

Of two writers, the one a pedal hedonist, the other an engineering missionary, though they might both include all these characteristics, yet in order to produce their own desired atmosphere they would differ in the way they subordinated one idea to another, that is, in the structure of their ideas. Their structure differs with and is controlled by their different aims.

Let us suppose that our attitude to a road is admiration of its vital power as a connecting link ; our aim is to show and make others feel that it has that power. It is not unlikely that with such an aim we should choose, for one particular road, an arterial road. The artery is an epitome of many characteristics of the road ; but not suggestive of its enduring solidity. A combination of these two ideas, however, seems to contain the nucleus of a structure ; and its form might be set down on the blackboard as follows :

*Subject—Roads*

An arterial road, as typical

Solidity

Permanence

(Solid) weight of traffic

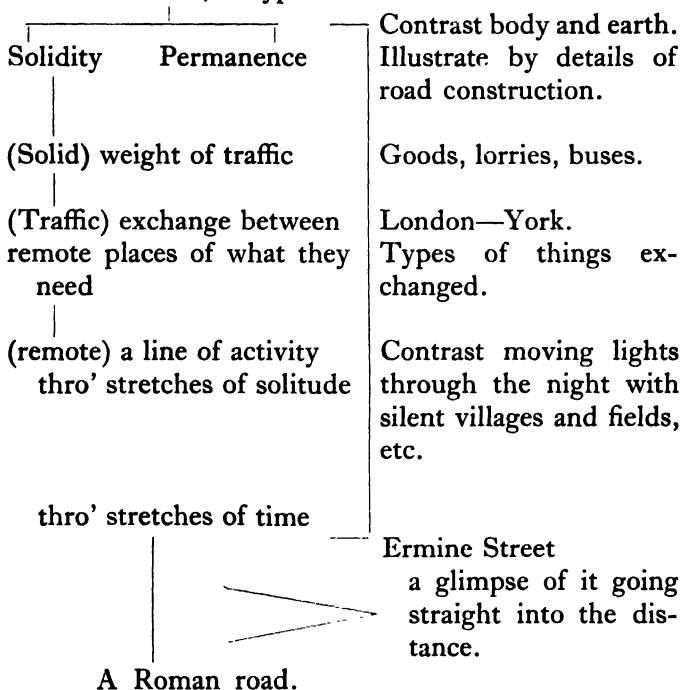
(Traffic) exchange between  
remote places of what they need

(remote) road a line of activity  
thro' stretches of solitude  
thro' stretches of time

A Roman road.

But this is not quite all the skeleton : or at least, side by side with it, we could suggest something of the relative emphasis each segment is to bear by clues to treatment. For example :

An arterial road, as typical



Different colours of chalk might help some boys to realise more easily the differences of emphasis.

In attempting work of this kind I think a teacher must risk something. He must work, as much as possible, extempore. I do not mean that he should

trust merely to chance. He must be clear beforehand about his own attitude to the subject, but the expression of that attitude through a structure should be left in suspense. For two reasons: the first, that the structure should be as far as possible the result of some concerted attitude on the part of the class; the second, that, wherever it is directly the teacher's work, the class will learn more by the way he contends with difficulties as they arise than if he has a cut-and-dried scheme up his sleeve. For this, of course, it must be assumed that his control of the class is such that he can afford to make mistakes—I need scarcely add that this does not mean that he should be a good disciplinarian in the vulgar sense of the words.

When in doubt he can always fall back on a proposition of Euclid, and model his structure on that for the time being; and take his material from subjects of an objective logical type, such, for example, as regulations for local traffic during some ceremony, the drafting of rules for a game, the care of an animal. From Euclid he should learn the importance of choosing a point at which to begin, such that the reader does not feel himself dragged arbitrarily round corners to an unsatisfying conclusion. Strictly speaking, given a certain attitude on a certain subject in a certain individual there should be only one possible beginning, middle and end to its expression.

And one last suggestion on the skeleton—perhaps the making of a talkie script might make an entertaining experiment. Owing to the dramatic action involved it would, of course, be an easy way of selecting an outline; but if together the teacher and class had enough

imagination, in making adjustments between scenario, shots, and dialogue and other sounds they would find their outline tested by a succession of useful checks ; and in their effort to make a satisfactory outline, they would gain valuable experience in arrangement and adaptation, and prepare the way for fixing more elusive types of structure.

Précis is among other things the discovery of structure without the necessity of invention. It is a translation of given material into a new shape. Its value, as a training in precision, will depend on the clearness of purpose with which the new shape is made. It is a common school exercise, and much has been written on it. So I will confine myself to one or two points which seem to me, though obvious, not too obvious to be omitted. The first is the importance of a controlling aim, the second that of oral co-operation between teacher and class until the boys have shown some power of blazing a trail for themselves.

The controlling aim is, of course, to extract that essential minimum from a passage, without which the passage can have no coherence of meaning. But what that minimum is, is not always easy for a boy to discover, and until he does, the aim does not become a controlling aim. One may, for example, take a parliamentary speech, and one may perhaps extract from it a skeleton of rational connections and call this a précis of it. But though as a minimum expression of the real meaning of the speech this may be sufficient for Hansard, it may be no less insufficient for a party journal. And the fact that both accounts are forms of logical anatomy does not prove that a logical argument should



be taken as a standard form of condensation. When, for example, a boy is asked to write a *précis* of the fight in the woodland cottage of Peacock's *Maid Marian*, he is not faced with a logical argument, but with a series of actions, and to think of a logical argument will not help him to decide which of these actions are essential to his account and which not. His decisions will be good or bad, according as he is able to take up a point of view with regard to his material and distinguish emphases in agreement with it. And even in a passage where to the teacher there is an obvious logical sequence of main ideas, it must be remembered that these may not be equally clear to the boy: and they will not become clear simply because he is told that they are a part of a logical sequence.

So in my opinion it is as well, wherever possible, to provide for the *précis* a setting which will assist his choice of material; so that he may become used to looking on the work as an interesting kind of mental analysis, and not a dead mechanical trick. An example or two may explain what I mean. If one takes the duel incident in *Esmond*, in which Castlewood is fatally wounded—a passage extending towards fifteen hundred words—it would give a boy a definite point of view, if his *précis* were taken to be the written evidence given by imaginary members of Castlewood's party at the subsequent inquest—provided that it was made clear to the boy what a court regards as evidence and what not. This point of view would guide him through what was irrelevant in the conversations contained in the original; and if the statement was considered too lengthy, it could on second examination be reduced by

selecting what the coroner considered to be essential to a statement of the events. Or instead of this, part of the class could write as members of Castlewood's party, part as members of Mohun's party, and the final report be made by the whole class from a comparison of the two accounts and the original. A different type, a mixture of selection and enlargement, would be the deduction of Esmond's character from incidents related in the original passage; and still nearer approach to original composition but still based on a knowledge of the given passage would be Esmond's thoughts, as he was conveyed in the chair to Leicester Fields.

Or to take the poem of 'John Gilpin', the *précis* might be a plain narrative statement of events, in which all incidents or ideas were omitted which did not seem to reach a uniform standard of importance. The simple structure of the episode does not need to be assisted by a setting. Or the *précis* function could be equally made active by asking for an answer to the question, What do you know of the author of 'John Gilpin' from the poem? This would require a thorough examination of the original, and the extraction from it of material, controlled by a definite point of view.

Or one could focus attention on a passage by giving it a particular utility value: as, for example, by collecting through the *précis* actual evidence of a writer's views on a certain subject, when a judgment on those views is needed for an estimate of the writer's value. Here is a rather fantastic setting for such a *précis*. Suppose that in another type of lesson—of which a little more later—the class had defined the idea 'loyalty', and out of it had come the suggestion that

if a man betrayed his friend, and then professed to write on friendship, his writing would betray him, that is, one would not expect to find his views on friendship convincing. This suggestion might be crystallised into an interesting particular form. Bacon seemed to have been a friend of Essex, as long as Essex was a profitable source of income ; and then deserted him. He also wrote on friendship. One's natural inference would be that his thoughts must be unconvincing and show a lack of understanding the truth about the matter. And I would suggest that for the class to have such a prejudice, to feel antagonistic to the writer might be a good approach to reading his essay. It would be a definite attitude ; but before they could claim that the attitude was justified, they would have to know exactly what that essay contained. A vague impression from one reading would not be evidence enough. They could extract the *point* of its thought in a hundred and fifty words, and by each sentence, where the original showed any marked attitude of mind towards the subject, indicate that attitude by an epithet or a word or two of comment.

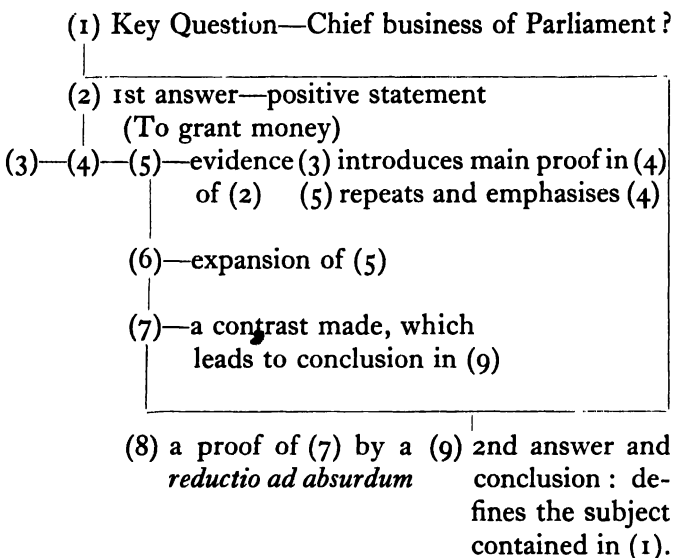
As to the oral procedure, I would suggest briefly a first reading to get a general idea of the sense, with rough notes on the blackboard building up a tentative structure, and then a testing of this structure by a second intensive reading, to see whether the sense of any section had been distorted in the compressed note of it and whether the coherence between one section and another had been faithfully maintained.

Precision may also be encouraged in work of specialised types arising out of *précis*.

An account of a scientific experiment can be checked by the objective course of events in the experiment ; to check the reasoning of a paragraph by the specific relation of one sentence to another is a much more difficult thing, but it might be worth trying with boys of sixteen. Take, for example, the following passage from Seeley: '(1) What is the principal business of Parliament? (2) To grant money for the annual expenses of administration. (3) If you examine the plan according to which the parliamentary system is arranged, you will see that everything is made dependent on this main task. (4) It is still possible to mark the traces of the old system, according to which legislation instead of being the work of Parliament was the concession extorted from the Crown as an equivalent for the money granted. (5) The session, as I have said, is a conference or negotiation. (6) The parties to it are on the one side the government, on the other side the representatives of the people : these arrange the terms of a bargain according to which certain sums should be granted and certain grievances redressed. (7) The redress of grievances is legislation, but the grant of money cannot properly be called legislation. (8) At least, if the word legislation be so loosely defined as to make it include the levying of a sum of money in one year for the use of government, it ceases to have anything distinctive and therefore can no longer be distinguished from executive power. (9) Thus the main or principal business of Parliament is one which cannot be properly described as legislative.'

An intelligent boy, reading this carefully, would know that it represents a coherent system of thought.

He could tell you that Seeley is claiming by certain arguments that the chief business of Parliament is not legislative, and further he could probably record the arguments, if desired. But he might have a still more definite impression of its content, if he tried to work out a scheme of the relations between the sentences themselves, as for example :



If, as is probable, this seems too difficult a task for the average boy, material of a simpler kind and a simpler kind of connective explanation may be used. For example, here is the opening paragraph of 'Hans the Hedgehog' (Grimm): (1) 'Once upon a time there was a Farmer who had quite enough of money and property to live upon, but rich as he was, he lacked one

piece of fortune ; he had no children. (2) Ofttimes when he went to market with the other farmers, they laughed at him and asked him why he had no children. (3) At length he flew into a passion and when he came home he said, " I will have a child and it shall be a hedgehog." "

In this paragraph there are three sentences, if by sentences one means communities of ideas. Each sentence has a clear thought-connection with its neighbour. (2) is the direct consequence of (1) and (3) of (2). By examining the main ideas in each sentence one can trace the exact point of connection. In (1) we have the ideas : farmer—rich—childless ; in (2) derided—questioned ; in (3) anger—assertive answer—child hedgehog. This might be put diagrammatically :

(1) Statement : farmer—rich—childless

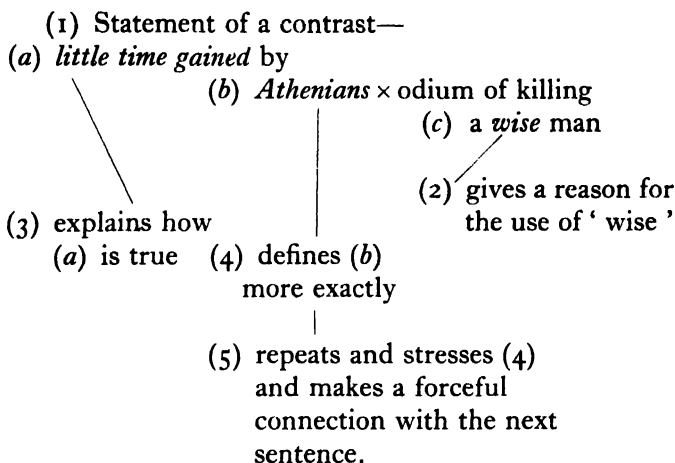
(2) consequence :        
                                  derision                      questioning

(3) consequence :      anger—child hedgehog answer.

Again, here is a passage from Plato's *Apology* (translated by Church) : ' (1) You have not gained very much time, Athenians, and as the price of it, you will have an evil name from all who wish to revile the city, and they will cast in your teeth that you put Socrates, a wise man, to death. (2) For they will certainly call me wise, whether I am wise or not, when they want to reproach you. (3) If you would have waited for a little

while, your wishes would have been fulfilled in the course of nature, for you see that I am an old man, far advanced in years, and near to death. (4) I am speaking not to all of you, only to those who have voted for my death. (5) And now I am speaking to them still.'

Diagrammatically this might be put :



And as an extension to the diagram, if in itself it seems a mere logical mortification of the original, one could either ask for a column of words describing the tone of each sentence or give a selection of such words and ask the boy to choose which he thought appropriate, and enter it in an adjoining column. I would suggest, for example, such a selection as :

Sentence (1) Reproachful—caustic—boastful—ironic—  
dignified — advisory — candid — threatening —  
sensible—prophetic.

- (2) Assertive — apologetic — clear-sighted — worldly wise — reasonable.
- (3) Politic — sarcastic — good-humoured — appealing — impersonal — dramatic — realistic.
- (4) Conciliatory — grave — astute — matter-of-fact — patient.
- (5) Intense — serene — bitter — contemptuous — solemn.

These terms do not all refer to Socrates' attitude of mind ; some of them refer to his intentions in speaking, the effect he wished to make on other minds. The difference would become apparent in examining those which a boy chose. And supposing that he could choose not more than two for each sentence, he would have a maximum of ten, which should give an impression of a definite atmosphere conveyed by the speech, a tone consistent in its minor variations. In comparing individual selections and discussing them with a view to agreeing as nearly as possible to one common choice, the class should, as this is added to the logical scheme on the board, come to understand precisely and intelligibly the meaning of the original.

Some may consider this type of analysis too artificial and too difficult. They may argue that however carefully you dismantle an onion, you cannot put it together again, and the whole effort is merely a tearful waste of time. I am quite prepared to admit that these exercises are both tentative and clumsy. They may also seem to be merely method gone mad ; but I still feel that though method is no substitute for intelligence, intelligence may find its greatest opportunity with



many teachers, when it is focussed to an issue by meticulousities of method. On the other hand I admit of course that there are more teachers with a method than with intelligence, but not always with a method, which may sting them, if they are not intelligent in its use. And even at the risk of unconvincing failure, one should experiment in search of such a type of method. As to difficulty, that is a question of whether the boys are interested or not ; and diagrams appeal to them like signposts to motorists.

After this half-hearted apology I find myself still heading for further artifices ; I will treat of them as briefly as possible.

Among other problems arising out of *précis*, one that seems to demand close attention is that of the form of verbal connection between groups of ideas. Boys may conceive a number of ideas on a subject, all arranged in a coherent succession either of logic or mood ; and yet, when they set these down on paper group by group, clause by clause or sentence by sentence, they find great difficulty in finding the appropriate verbal connection between them ; and the result may often be that through this lack of skill their original coherence of thought is fractured.

After fourteen a boy may fight shy of seeing his pages littered with *and*, *now*, *so*, *then*, etc., not because he has been told that they were bad English—and probably at a time when they were very appropriate English—but because he is confronted with idea groups, for which these are not satisfactory connections. He is no longer dealing only with subjects, thought about which is best expressed by making one simple

group of ideas stand out clear against another and, as it were, insisting on their independence ; or with ideas, which follow one another in an obvious and easy sequence, each apparently of the same value in making a flock as is each single sheep—as for example in a series of simple acts ; but he has also to deal with clusters of ideas such that their total meaning may be destroyed if one group of ideas is removed from the cluster by giving it the status of a new sentence, or if, it being necessary to break up a cluster, the constituent groups are resolved into sentences which do not verbally reproduce the coherences of the original thought.

After this sentence I would put in a plea that the following exercises should be regarded as exercises in connection, and not as discouragement of simple direct statement : simple sentence shoulder to shoulder with simple sentence, where the sense demands it. Mere combination should not be regarded as progress in style.

I suggest, then, that a boy might practise verbal connection without the full strain of invention and profit by it. For example, one might ask him to connect in as many verbal ways as possible in one sentence the three parts of a true or false syllogism—allowing him to make such verbal changes as he thinks necessary for the sense, and then examine and discuss them in relation to their logical value. Supposing that he is given the three sentences ‘ All men are mortal ’, ‘ X is a man ’, ‘ X is mortal ’, and asked to join them in one sentence, he may reasonably be expected to produce such sentences as ‘ Since all men are mortal, and X is a man,

X is mortal', 'Because X is a man, and all men are mortal, X is mortal'. But he is also likely to produce such sentences as 'X is mortal, because he is a man, and all men are mortal'—where there may be ambiguity. And if the original sentences are given in a different order, or if they are of the type 'Some oranges are sweet', 'This is an orange', 'This is sweet', he is likely to produce a variety of connections which will give him practice in verbal facility and at the same time provide interesting scope for examining what is sound or unsound reasoning.

Connections based on logic have their limitations, but, though they may not have apparently as clear a test of their soundness, there are connections of another type which are equally useful for practice. For example, take the three sentences 'Distant bells were ringing', 'A hill overlooked a valley', 'A solitary shepherd was tending his sheep': let the class connect these in one or two sentences, making what verbal changes they like, provided that they do not change the main ideas of the original. One might expect such results as :

A hill, on which a solitary shepherd was tending his sheep, stood above a valley, from which distant bells were ringing.

A solitary shepherd, tending his sheep on the hill, listened to the murmur of bells in the distant valley below.

Below was a valley and a distant murmur of bells ; above a hill, on which a solitary shepherd was tending his sheep.

And so on.

Such sentences, while they give practice in mere verbal manipulation, may also form the basis of a useful critical discussion. For instance, it might be agreed from the above examples that the most effective linking-up of the ideas was the one in which there was apparently no connecting word; that contrast may be an excellent connection. And to discover this, the class will have judged the sentences from many angles.

In these exercises it is assumed, obviously, that boys are familiar with clause analysis. Such analysis may be regarded as a part of grammar, and will be considered under that heading later. But, as the treatment of grammar in school seems to have little value, unless it is partly psychological, clause analysis must be based on some understanding of how the mind deals with complex groups, for which it must find verbal forms; and as such, has functions akin to those of *précis*, and what may be called appreciation. To trace variations in sentence structure as a mode of clause analysis, though it is a grammatical exercise, is also one way, and a useful way, by which one may approach a comparison between the aims and interests of writers of different periods and an understanding of the way in which their minds worked. The subordinate clause as used by Malory, Bacon, Taylor, and so on to present-day writers, may help to give some insight into the changes in mental attitudes and interests of successive ages. It is also through its relating of verbal form to aim and subject matter, a not unpleasant byway to appreciation. But this is not for the average boy under sixteen. He may, however, find some profit, as he

undoubtedly does find some interest—in itself a profit—in what may seem a very artificial piece of gymnastics. And part of the interest, at least, comes of not having to meet a strain too great for his mental capacity. The gymnastics are these. Either he may be given an incident, argument or expression of feeling, and a scheme of clauses, into which he must put it ; or a scheme of clauses for which he must provide his own material. For example, he might be given the following scheme of clauses, main, noun, adjectival, adverbial (expressing consequence)—not necessarily to be used in that order ; and the following incident : ‘ Can I keep my head dry without powder ? I am resolved to try ; for when I had Sarah to comb my head clean, I found it foul with powdering and other troubles.’ The ‘ fair copy ’ of which is ‘ Had Sarah to comb my head clean, which I found so foul with powdering and other troubles that I am resolved to try how I can keep my head dry without powder ’. I need scarcely name the author. And of the two accounts the boy might recognise the more consistent character of the second, which does not begin like the first, with what might be a modern advertisement hanging in a Restoration barber’s window.

Where the boy provides his own material, the scheme may include not only the kind but also the relative position and length of clause to be used. This will add to the difficulty of the exercise ; it may also make the boy more sensitive to the verbal arrangement of ideas and its effect on meaning.

In *précis* proper one syncopates the original sequence of ideas ; one may make some arrangement

with the residue, after the inessential parts are cut away, in order to preserve original emphasis, but one does not rearrange the original before curtailing it. However, in making the *précis* one is concerned with the coherent order of ideas ; and this concern with coherence can be focussed on rearrangement alone—as a variation on the usual *précis*. I have touched on the value of rearranging disordered sentences before, but then they were obviously not in their right order. Now a boy should be able to perceive less obvious incoherences, and the passage to be rearranged should have a semblance of order, enough to make him examine its sense very carefully, if he is to make improvements. Nor should it necessarily be a literal rearrangement. He should be allowed to use his own words where without them he feels he cannot give a connection its proper force.

Perhaps the teacher will best understand what I propose if he looks into the two following passages, both having as their topic the reclaiming of a farm, but the first deliberately disordered :

(1) ‘ The fields from which my uncle’s ancestors reared prize shearlings and garnered the best corn in the shire, had been robbed for fifty years by lazy tenants. Ten years ago these were ill-drained arable, where ploughing strained the teams. The pastures were thick with bushes, the arable with charlock and thistle. Ten years ago it was a desolation : the property on which my uncle had risked his fortune. Nuns Farm stands about half a mile from the main road at the top of wide sloping pastures. He had taken a risk and been successful. Now on the flat upland stood

fine springing winter wheat ; in the yards were no quagmires, no wasteful siping, no draughty broken walls. Where once the water poured down the deep ruts, a clean hard road led up to the farm between clean pastures, fringed with oakwoods, leys rich in cocksfoot, timothy and white clover ; and if all went well, barley would yield another eight quarters to the acre. Well might my uncle be content as he strode with his old lantern from his bullocks to his horses. Ten years ago it used to stagger through bullying winds. In water-logged yards the beasts sickened or grew thin under draughty broken byres, and rabbits from the woods ate the weak crops. No cake or beans could cure their hungry leanness. Now it glowed like a steady beacon, and already it was the end of January, and a good tilth for the spring sowings. Solid airy byres set in concrete housed the cattle, and cake was worth feeding : and fragrant ricks still stood close in the rickyard. In all that ruin my uncle used to sit through the long winter evenings grimly mapping out how he should spend his money. He was more genial now. 'There was no stint of good chaff and roots.'

(2) 'Nuns Farm, the property on which my uncle had risked his fortune, stands about half a mile from the main road at the top of wide sloping pastures, fringed with oakwoods. Ten years ago it was a desolation. The fields from which his ancestors reared prize shearlings and garnered the best corn in the shire, had for fifty years been robbed by lazy tenants. The pastures were thick with bushes, the arable with charlock and thistle. In water-logged yards the beasts sickened or grew thin, under draughty broken byres.

No cake or beans could cure their hungry leanness. In all that ruin my uncle used to sit through the long winter evenings grimly mapping out how he should spend his money. He was more genial now. He had taken a risk and been successful. Where once the water poured down the deep ruts, a clean hard road led up to the farm between clean pastures, leys rich in cocksfoot, timothy and white clover. Ten years ago these were ill-drained arable, where ploughing strained the teams and rabbits from the woods ate the weak crops. Now on the flat upland stood fine springing winter wheat, and a good tilth for the spring sowings, and if all went well, barley would yield another eight quarters to the acre. Fragrant ricks still stood close in the rickyard and already it was the end of January. In the yards were no quagmires, no wasteful siping, no draughty broken walls. Solid airy byres set in concrete housed the cattle, and cake was worth feeding, and there was no stint of good chaff and roots. Well might my uncle be content as he strode with his old lantern from his bullocks to his horses. Ten years ago it used to stagger through bullying winds ; now it glowed like a steady beacon.'

This passage has a simple structure : the locality of the farm, its former condition, the beginning of change, the changes in detail—present contrasted with past, the result symbolised by the lantern, and as a cement to the whole, the idea of a risk being taken.

It is probable that for some time a class would need to be given either the whole structure or its first part, as a clue to the rearrangement of a passage—I am assuming that practice in puzzling out significant order



will make a boy quicker at recognising related groups of ideas.

One objection that may be raised is that one could not dictate a passage of the above length and expect a boy to rearrange it, both in one period. The answer to that is either a shorter passage or a duplicator. Another objection may be that the process may drag a boy too often through the same set of ideas—especially as there should also be full discussion later of the various solutions offered. If this objection means that the boy will lose interest, the answer is that that will depend on the intelligence shown by the teacher in discussion, for most boys are very persistent in solving a puzzle, even if they fight shy of a problem. And as to its being a rather pedestrian occupation for boys of sixteen, who in the eyes of some should be speeding along on borrowed tyres, I am inclined to fall back on this observation of Stendhal's: " " Why is it ", wondered Fabrizio, " that they keep going over things which we all know perfectly well ! " He had not yet learned that this is the method whereby the humblest folk in France think a matter out.'

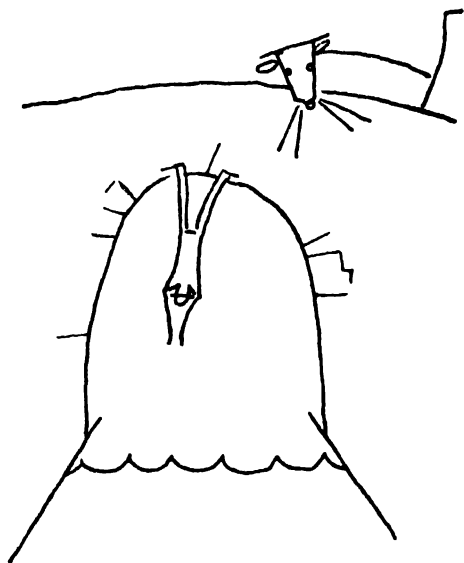
Another kind of exercise, which by virtue of its name, at least, should make for precise thinking, is definition. But, as I am not thinking of exercises in formal logic, I may be guilty of using the word rather loosely as a convenient heading for any exercise which encourages accuracy of word and thought: a very indefinite heading, in fact. Perhaps one or two instances will suggest the limits of what I have in mind.

There is or was an advertisement, in which part of a man is seen in an easy-chair, a position of great

apparent comfort. Supposing the class had the advertisement in front of them, and they were asked to write down as many words as they could, indicating the relation of the man to the chair, and then to choose which word seemed most appropriate, they would not be strictly defining that word, they would merely be describing what they felt they saw, as accurately as possible ; but it would be a useful exercise both in enlargement and selection. To write down ' was in ', ' occupied ', ' sat in ', ' rested in ', ' reclined in ', ' leaned back in ', ' lounged in ', is a process testing the range of one's words and also to some extent the versatility of one's point of view. To choose one of these, as conveying most clearly what one feels in looking at the object, is to some extent a selective discipline. There is nothing essentially different in this from what the class would be doing in an earlier stage in descriptive work—and such descriptive work obviously need not be confined to an earlier stage. But if after describing a chair so that it could be distinguished as a chair with a particular character, recognisable among half a dozen, they were asked to describe the same chair so that it could be recognised as quite distinct from any table or any sofa, they would be taken from the accurate recording of an actual experience to a point at which they would be trying to abstract something definite and apart from abstractions made from many actual experiences. They would be making a definition, even if it was in result not very scientific ; and also making a basis for important oral discussion on the logical meaning of things.

Or if a teacher can use a piece of chalk even in a

primitive way, he can provide matter for descriptions, in which the most urgent need will be for using words strictly in accordance with, as it were, their terms of reference, however much the assisting imagination may tempt forwards to something beyond them. For example, if he draws two curves, a figure half-way between them and a wavy line and on the uppermost curve an animal, thus :



and if the class writes down, as exactly as possible, what is contained in these lines,—it seems to me that here are conditions for a description in which precision of terms will have first claim on the imagination. Is the figure, for example, whatever it is, falling, diving, dropping, plunging or being tossed into the water?

The decision of what is the most appropriate word will have to be a majority decision, where the drawing cannot avoid an ambiguity ; but there is no harm in that. It will be good for the class to learn that finality in statement is very often a matter of opinion.

But if the teacher chooses as his subject a hieroglyph, and asks for a description without recourse to similes, which would be the natural refuge of the class, he will be taking them nearer to the language of definition, and if he takes a ruler and draws three lines the length of it, each joined to the other, and asks for a description of the result, it may be put down in two words : equilateral triangle. One may dismiss these as inadequate ; but if the description is, ' three straight chalk lines in the same plane, and of the same length, each joined to other at their extremities ', one is still hovering near the language of Euclid.

I submit blackboard work of this kind for consideration as a means of making a transition from description to definition, from the use of words in reference to the particular to their use in reference to the abstract. It combines various class activities in sound proportions. And if the chief obstacle is inability to draw in public, the teacher can cut out a stencil in private, or insist that his course of training should include at least a week as a pavement artist.

The naming of an imaginary invention and the specifying of its features with a view to a patent would combine exercise in the suggestive and the definitive use of words. The drafting of a fictitious resolution, based on historical data, though it cannot be called definition, would at least, as a co-operative piece of

work, require a common consent to the meaning of the terms used and therefore a clear understanding of what they are intended to mean. And, incidentally, this kind of work might help to make the committee, the unit of modern public life, something more than an audience for selfish tongues.

Then there is also what one might call the definition of single terms, or lexicography unveiled. One can give the class two or three words to define on paper, for example, 'theatre', 'crisis', 'spade', and on a selection after each attempt base an oral comparison and 'fair copy'; or one may take a word like 'true' or 'wit', and either get the class to write down sentences illustrating as many different uses of the word as they can think of or set them to hunt up as many passages as they can find, in which the word has a different meaning, and then from the collected material attempt to arrive at something near a definition. The nearest will probably be no nearer than multiple definition,<sup>1</sup> but whether such relativity leaves one dissatisfied or not, one should be assured of interesting discriminations in the attempt to reach some one and precise meaning. If anyone thinks that lessons of this kind are likely to be intrinsically dull, they may change their mind when such words as 'justice', 'rebel', 'patriotism' stalk into the class-room.

Finally, although metaphor, or translation from one set of ideas to another, is best practised as incidental to the whole process of reading and composition, it may be made the subject of a specific exercise without

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dr. I. A. Richards' *Mencius on the Mind ; Basic Rules of Reason* (Basic English).

becoming regarded as an artificial figure of speech rather than a vital connection between speech and meaning. In a given passage, for example, a class may attempt to eliminate all metaphors, substituting for them words of, as it were, one logical plane, and then note the resultant change in meaning. Or the process may be reversed. For example, in the course of *précis* a boy may have realised that when he is cutting away, what he cuts away is very often something concrete, particular and with a special alogical character, and what he retains is a plain course of reasoning or sequence of fact, with a tendency to the abstract and without suggestive variety. The words of a speech, which establish an emotional rapport between speaker and audience, disappear : tropes, illustrations, descriptions fade away : there is left a residuum of reasoning, stark and sometimes indecently thin. The boy may from this process become aware of the difference between what one may roughly call abstract and concrete. Instead, therefore, of his eliminating the metaphorical, he might also expand the logical. Supposing that he is given this assertion, ' In the exchange of confidences the heart finds a salutary relief ', and he understands the sense of it, or it is explained to him. Then let him expand the expression of the idea, so that it leaves a vivid impression on the mind, and one cannot overlook it, as one might this mild and uneventful sentence. If possible, let him expand it to three or four lines, using as many clauses as he likes. Perhaps the best he can do is to write down, ' It is as good as a dose of medicine to talk to a friend and get things off your chest '. This is, at least, a clear understanding of the original, vivid

but with rather a commonplace and ephemeral vividness, likely to be repeated by most of his fellows and so losing emphasis ; but if he specified the ' medicine ' and the ' things ', he would have the material if not the emphasising form of the original. ' You may take sarza ', says Bacon, ' to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flower of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum for the brain ; but '—and after this imposing array of drugs it is a truly emphatic ' but '—' no receipt openeth the heart but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession.' Bacon certainly has no light touch, but he does hammer out the therapeutic properties of a friend and also the sheer weight of suppressions which may cumber the mind, and he does it very much by particularising in different ways the two ideas ' exchange of confidences ' and ' relief '.

Shakespeare does the same thing with greater skill. The Elizabethans seem to have loved heaping up precious items. It must have been the escape from mediaeval formalism into the actual created thing behind it. Bacon is at it again in his essay on Gardens. He begins with ' God Almighty first planted a garden ', as though he were going to philosophise like a divine, and then he is off into a catalogue, which thrills him. As an allotment-holder he would probably have been a sincere man. ' Next to that is the musk rose : then the strawberry leaves dying, with a most excellent cordial smell ; then the flower of the vines, it is a little dust like the dust of a bent, which grows upon the cluster in the first coming forth ; then sweetbrier, then wall-

flowers, which are very delightful to be set under a parlour or lower chamber window ; then pinks and gilliflowers, specially the matted pink and clove gilliflower ; then the flowers of the lime trees ; then the honeysuckles, so they be somewhat afar off. Of bean flowers I speak not, because they are field flowers ; but those which perfume the air most delightfully, not passed by as the rest, but being trodden upon and crushed, are three; that is, burnet, wild thyme and water mints : therefore you are to set whole alleys of them, to have the pleasure when you walk or tread. . . .'

But I digress . . . and on dangerous ground. If, taking this essay on gardens as a model, I were to ask a boy to write on the internal-combustion engine, I might get a catalogue of parts, competent, vigorous, but in spite of the boy's enthusiasm perhaps not as inspiring as Bacon's catalogue, because it would probably lack all the minor variations ; an essay, however, impressive in particulars; but I should, by suggesting a catalogue as a model, be guilty of inducing him to get that verbal shock effect which carried with it a certain emphasis. I should be attempting to teach him a style. I might argue that in pointing out the vividness of the particular, as compared with the general, I was only preserving a balance between the two at a season when the boy was doing a good deal of pruning, and that as he was of an examinable age, he would not satisfy examiners if he were merely logical. A one-line sentence of compact economic reasoning may take five minutes or more to produce, and if he has an hour and a half for an essay, and he spends half an



hour in making a choice and a skeleton, and in the remaining hour writes twelve lines of very cogent but apparently unimpressive thought, an examiner might make a mistake : and he would have a just excuse. An essay is not a logical anatomy : it should be something of flesh and blood also. And as a boy is just as likely to fail in imaginative detail as in logical generalisation, or to make dogmatic assertions without producing circumstantial evidence as to join instance to instance without tracing a logical connection between them, it might seem justifiable to help him to keep a balance between abstract and concrete. But still this may be regarded as special pleading ; in fact a subterfuge, whereby to encroach on the boy's individual style.

It may be said that such points as I have noted in Bacon can be noted in their proper place—in the reading lesson : to remove them out of that place would be to remove them from their vital context. Further, that one may frame exercises in grammatical or other analysis—they both have a tradition of artificiality—but to frame exercises, in which the boy's constructive power is subjected to artificial conditions, borders on the immoral and is certainly an arid practice. It was that kind of thing which made the classical scholar argue correctly about things which could never exist except in his lack of contact with reality (which is unfortunately often true). In fine, 'let them [students] learn no scheme of treatment,' said Sidgwick, 'aim at no style, but just try to think out the question and write sense ; they will *soon* find that the best way to get style is to have things to say. Their repetitions and confusions and baldnesses come as *you*

*will easily show them*, not from having no style but from not having their points thought out.'

There is much loose thinking in Sidgwick's well-meant advice ; but in so far as it is a plea for individual and free activity of thought, it is welcome. But this general prejudice against what is taken to be an artificial treatment of language would be distinctly unconvincing if it was extended to arts, in which the need for technical practice is more obvious. And the implication that in giving a boy constructive exercises in language one is attempting directly to teach him style, is quite unwarranted. I do not deny that his style may be affected by them ; but what style he learns from them will be a matter for his own individual power of selection. The particular rhythm with which a man expresses his ideas—which is almost synonymous with style—is a personal thing and only occurs where there is a person whence it may proceed. And technical exercises do not create a person nor do they necessarily condition the creation of a person any more than any other external influence. But in so far as they indirectly affect style, there are reasons why the effect may be to the good. They may, to begin with, impose a restraint on the teacher, who complacently and unawares impresses his own rhythm on everyone else he can. Then, they may also give a useful focus to the boy's desire to imitate,—a desire which comes to most boys who are seriously interested in thoughts and words, when experiences become more complex and when to escape the difficulty of inventing a mode of expression for these they borrow the mode of others. To imitate many modes consciously may be better than

to give blind adherence to one, especially when the points of imitation are found in technical problems of expression common to all writers—that of emphasis, for example. And finally, this type of exercise may have value, simply because it leads directly and definitely to a by-product, which may be its most important activity—critical contact with the work of other writers; but in promoting criticism it has the saving grace, so often insisted on here, of requiring a constructive venture from the critic himself.

After these contentions, what I have to propose concerning the nature of such exercises may seem rather an anti-climax, and the exercises too slight to be anything but innocuous. They are admittedly tentative in character. They may suggest possibilities to some: they may have been long anticipated by others.

Take the matter of emphasis. If anyone is learning to speak in public, among other things he will have to learn how to keep silent for variable lengths of time; what particular variation of silent intervals he will use on any one occasion will depend on his own particular intentions for that occasion; but as a beginning, he must be able to make a pause before he can vary its length. If he can make a pause, he can arrest attention on the words immediately before it, and suspend attention on the next thing he is going to say. The pause is one chief component in emphasis, and therefore in balance and rhythm. In a similar way the attention of the eye may be arrested and suspended by pause equivalents in print. They may take the form of printed stops or of unexpected variation in the order of words. There are other ways of securing written

emphasis, but of this first. Taking the simple statement, 'the dog is the most faithful of all animals', one may rewrite it thus, 'of all animals the dog is the most faithful', and then after reading them aloud, ask the class what effect the change in order seems to have made. Of course, one takes a risk; but rather a slight risk. Among what, after all due allowance, are obvious irrelevancies, one will probably have reference to greater emphasis on certain words, and possibly to the slowing-up of the sentence. These points may be examined and the class then try other ordering of the sentence and consider the effect. Examination may then be turned to such well-known inversions as 'of all sciences is our poet the monarch', and 'And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity'—an astounding example of emphasis through inversion and its effect through pause and structural suspense: which will lose nothing in a thorough and simple examination.

If the class shows in the course of questioning that it realises that the change of order may have something to do with the meaning of a passage, as that meaning is impressed on others, then they may suggest a statement and make such inversions in it on paper as they can show to bring emphasis on certain chosen words.

The next lesson might begin with the reading of certain well-known inversions and quasi-inversions and other ways of suspending the course of thought, such as 'In this unhappy battle was slain the Lord Viscount Falkland'; 'And yet steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight and whispering

from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford by her ineffable charm keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection, to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side?'; 'out of the darkness, which, in other more fortunate regions, has been so much more speedily dispelled'. Rewritten as, 'which has been dispelled so much more speedily in other more fortunate regions', what a commonplace this becomes, and is! 'From the plain to the mountains the shattered aqueducts, pier beyond pier, melt into the darkness', and so on. Different ways of varying emphasis should be noted as they occur, and compared, and then a model taken for class example,—for example, the simple type of suspense through an appositional phrase.

It may be said that this harping on suspense is a reversion to an out-of-date habit of thought: it betrays a hankering after reaction, the bondage of the English to the Latin mind; and English has become the most progressive language in the world by freeing itself from the static and synthetic. My answer to this is that a language may become progressive in grammatical form without being progressive in scope of composition: that—and I take the risk of seeming reactionary—modern habits of mind may lose something of value for the want of that self-restraint which is implied in verbal suspense; and that there are other ways of producing emphasis than by suspense. And exercises, similar to those I have suggested, may be devised for them.

There is, for example, the emphasis of repetition: repetition of the single arresting word, of particular

arrangements of words or structure, synthetic or anti-thetic.

‘ Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff but is pregnant with religion and poetry ’—the class might meet this thought first in the form of ‘ the precipices and torrents and cliffs are all pregnant with religion and poetry ’, and see how they could amend it.

‘ The western wave was all aflame.  
The day was well-nigh done !  
Almost upon the western wave  
Rested the broad bright Sun ;  
When that strange shape drove suddenly  
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars ;  
Heaven’s Mother send us grace !  
As if through a dungeon grate he peered  
With broad and burning face.’

One may say of this, ‘ Not a very subtle effect ’, but it is an effect with which it may be useful to experiment—though it might not be as popular as this :

‘ Trot, trot, trot, corpse body, to work.  
Chew, chew, chew, corpse body, at the meal.  
Sit, sit, sit, corpse body, in the car.  
Stare, stare, stare, corpse body, at the film.’

Or again repetition of structure :

What went ye out into the wilderness to see ? A reed  
shaken with the wind ?

But what went ye out for to see ? A man clothed in soft raiment ? Behold they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

But what went ye out for to see ? A prophet ? '

One might take suggestions from the class, preferably ideas taken from their own day-to-day experience, either in sentence form or just single words, or inchoate word groups, and work them out on the triad pattern, and examine the result, seeing whether the intention expressed by the words is conveyed successfully or not, that is, by comparison with its expression in a less obvious pattern : and being unmerciful to anything which is merely insignificant repetition.

I take this particular pattern, because it is as common in language as the pyramid in design. I see that it has lately attracted the psychological eye ;<sup>1</sup> but I am not convinced that its origin is merely ocular convenience. That seems to make utility an aesthetic principle. It is as common as the three nursery tales—the three little pigs, three bears, three sons to every ageing King ; it may be the same three as in the Trinity.

One finds it used, century after century.

' Men in great place ', writes Bacon, ' are thrice servants—servants of the Sovereign or state, servants of fame, and servants of business ; so that they have no freedom, neither in their persons, nor in their actions nor in their times.'

' They are loud, violent, and tedious ', writes Swift, ' in dwelling upon all circumstances which are not to

<sup>1</sup> Ballard, *Thought and Language*, p. 181 ff.

the purpose. For instance, in the case already mentioned, they never desire to know what claim or title my adversary has to my cow ; but whether the said cow were red or black, her horns long or short ; whether the field I graze her in be round or square ; whether she was milked at home or abroad ; what diseases she is subject to, or the like ; after which they consult precedents, adjourn the case from time to time, and in ten, twenty or thirty years come to an issue.'

' He has too much good sense ', writes Newman, ' to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember injuries and too indolent to bear malice. He is patient, forbearing and resigned on philosophical principles ; he submits to pain because it is inevitable, to bereavement because it is irreparable, and to death because it is his destiny.'

But one may say either that these were victims of Rome or of a class culture, or that a new age must have new forms or no forms at all. Innovation has already been consciously elaborated by James Joyce and Gertrude Stein ; but still the triad emerges out of their industriously made mazes of meaning : and D. H. Lawrence representing the unconscious found it a useful accident.

But in spite of its tenacity, one can try to destroy it by experiment and see what happens. One may end by finding attractive variations : but only if the work is taken throughout as an exact test of meaning and without any forced attempt to reconcile judgments, for the sake of finality, where the class is in disagreement. Otherwise it will be nothing but a dangerous training in formalism.



A last example of the triad, and I will leave this prickly subject.

Suppose the class is given the following statement : ' I'm down and out, torn up by the roots. God's will, no doubt, and just, I'll allow that. But that doesn't mean sitting down quiet under caddish insults, any more than what Job did. I'm alone, I don't care two pence about what the world says, no more than if I was on the top of the wave. But I'm not going to be blackguarded, not by anyone, not even a Duke of B. If my son was alive, he'd not have stood it. He's not : and it's up to me to see his father's name don't disgrace him.' And supposing that the boys are clear about its meaning : they may, then, be asked to consider what changes would be necessary if it was going to be published in *The Times* by a retired Cabinet Minister. Some cue to such changes may come from the difference between the protest made by the captain of a football team on the field and through the post. The difference will probably be in length and respectability of statement.

Then let the class attempt such a translation, and as it will be a form of expansion, experiment with the triad pattern. Finally, after a critical comparison of results, read Burke's rendering, and after reading examine its structural pattern. I transcribe it sentence by sentence :

' But a Disposer whose power we are little able to resist and whose wisdom it behoves us not at all to dispute, has ordained it in another manner, and (whatever my querulous weakness might suggest) a far better.

{ The storm has gone over me,  
And I lie like one of those old oaks which the late  
hurricane has scattered about me.

{ I am stripped of all my honours,  
I am torn up by the roots,  
And lie prostrate on the earth.

{ There, and prostrate there, I most unfeignedly  
recognise the divine justice, and in some degree  
submit to it.

{ But whilst I humble myself before God, I do not  
know that it is forbidden to repel the attacks of  
unjust and inconsiderate men.

The patience of Job is proverbial.

{ After some of the convulsive struggles of our  
irritable nature, he submitted himself,  
And repented in dust and ashes.

{ But even so I do not find him blamed for repre-  
hending, and with a considerable degree of  
asperity, those ill-natured neighbours of his  
who visited his dunghill to read him

{ moral,  
political,  
and economical  
lectures on his misery.

{ I am alone.  
I have none to meet my enemies in the gate.  
Indeed, my lord, I greatly deceive myself if in this  
hard season I would give a peck of refuse wheat  
for all that is called fame and honour in the  
world.

This is the appetite but of a few.

{ It is a luxury,  
it is a privilege,  
it is an indulgence for those who are at their ease.

But we are all of us made to shun disgrace, as we are  
made to shrink

{ from pain,  
and poverty,  
and disease.

It is an instinct ;  
and, under the direction of reason, instinct is always  
in the right.

I live in an inverted order.

{ Those who ought to have succeeded me are gone  
before me.

{ They who should have been to me as posterity are  
in the place of ancestors.

{ I owe to the dearest relation (which ever must  
subsist in memory) that act of piety which he  
would have performed to me.

I owe it to him to show that he was not descended,  
as the Duke of Bedford would have it, from an  
unworthy parent.'

And if, after a discussion, the verdict is ' we prefer  
the other man '—well and good.

## GRAMMAR

ENGLISH Grammar has suffered much from the classical tradition. Its textbooks have been written as apologies for the fact that the language is not highly inflectional and is not dead. There has been a change lately. English, as a living language, has found a stimulating admirer in Jespersen. Brunot has shaken his head over the 'parts of speech': ideas, not signs must be the basis of grammatical classification. Tradition has been disturbed, and there are now appearing school books in which grammar is made a subject for intelligent thought; and the schoolboy is no longer so often puzzled by having to put the egg, laid by the best little hen ever, into the accusative case and neuter gender. Grammar has become 'functional'.

Fifty years ago Arnold advised teachers to treat grammar as very simple logic—a more difficult thing than he may have suspected. He wrote one or two other things about it, which are worth quoting: 'After learning the definition of a noun to recognise nouns, when one meets with them and refer them to their definition, that is an exercise of intelligence. I observe that it animates the children, even amuses them. Indeed all that relates to language, that familiar but wonderful phenomenon, is naturally interesting, if it is not spoiled by being treated pedantically. In teaching grammar not to attempt too much and to be thoroughly simple, orderly and clear is most important.'

What he observed to-day might cause him both satisfaction and misgiving : satisfaction on account of improved methods, misgiving because the methods are more competent than some of those who use them, and the teaching sometimes apathetic ; as though the subject were being retained in the curriculum for form's sake.

This attitude is not altogether unnatural. It is a reaction from the pedant who, to defend and gratify a puny self, found it easier to teach in a static world of ideas, and found also that one way of securing this was to put language in irons, as it were ; give it fixed, if arbitrary laws and make submission to these laws a prominent part of his teaching. So it became accepted that correct speech and significant writing were acquired through a meticulous memorising of grammar, and especially accidence. The reaction to this point of view is to expel all grammatical paraphernalia, and leave the pupil to pick up his knowledge of grammar as incidental to his practical acquaintance with language. Practice does not go as far as the reaction itself. Grammar as a set subject is retained in school ; but what with the shadows of the past and the uncertainties of the present concerning its intrinsic nature, it retains its position somewhat on sufferance : and so far as the idle mind is concerned, it may remain in that unsatisfactory state. For to be ' thoroughly simple, orderly and clear ' in a systematic treatment of the subject is a much greater tax on the mind than to comment in passing on some titbit of syntax ; and a failure to be intelligent is much more conspicuous in the one case than the other.

Educational authorities are agreed that some continuous course in grammar is necessary to the boy at different stages. A revised grammatical terminology has been advised, as an inducement to make the subject live. But its future lies with the individual teacher. According as he can feel the value of such a course, can convince himself that it should be both interesting and stimulating and not a dead encumbrance imposed on the growing mind, so will it have a legitimate place in the curriculum. This means that he ought to think the matter out for himself and get for himself, as it were, some philosophy of grammar ; and in doing this, should, to begin with at least, consider the subject in reference to itself and the English course, alone. It is quite true that if a boy begins Latin at the age of eleven, it is very useful to the classical specialist that he should anticipate each part of the Latin course with some appropriate knowledge of syntax. If he can get that knowledge from the English specialist, it would probably be an economy of time. But that should not be considered in thinking out what grammar is to be taught in the English course. If the classical specialist requires the knowledge at what seems a premature time, he must supply it himself. Similarly with other languages. It is quite true that a boy may make poor progress in German because he does not understand such things as the active and passive voice or transitive and intransitive action of a verb. But in thinking out a treatment of the subject, one's first consideration must not be to work out a Bradshaw with other subjects : any more than one should in considering its application to elementary schools, take as a cardinal point the leav-

ing age of fourteen. If fourteen seems too early for the completion of a grammar course, it is not the course which should be changed, but the leaving age. If, when the matter has been thought out on its own merits, there are opportunities for timely co-operation with other teachers, so much the better.

I propose now to sketch out, without any attempt at completeness, what I would do under such circumstances. I do not wish to parallel various methods of treating in detail the main parts of the subject. Rather, assuming an acquaintance with such methods, I want to find an attitude to the subject which would make me feel it worth my while co-operating with them—and expose it as a bait for critical thought.

In the first place I would say that if grammar is to be taught systematically, it must be given generous time. 'Not to attempt too much' said Arnold—at once, one may add. Given unlimited time, a boy may learn the fundamentals of political economy at the age of ten, but, to make them accessible to his power of reasoning, they would have to be reduced to a very simple form, and at every step proof given that each point was thoroughly understood. The same with grammar. It is a subject in which there can be no links in the reasoning taken for granted; and that takes time. It should be treated as very simple logic, said Arnold—and I would add, as very simple psychology. And that also takes time.

If grammar is to be a course in which the relations and forms of words are studied for the laws or conventions underlying them, it should come at an age at which the mind is seriously putting thought into

systems : that is, when abstractions, generalisations and the beginnings of scientific method are becoming consciously intelligible processes. What that age is in years, is a matter of opinion. For the average boy I should not be inclined to make it less than thirteen. Before then he is not likely to recognise the significance of general laws in chemistry or of evidence in history.

Supposing the age is approximately correct, what is likely to be the value of such a course to the boy ? He will, among test tubes, calorimeters, nations, equations, vegetations, be making acquaintance in more or less degree with systematic thought : with the relation of the particular to the general : the reduction of the multifarious to some sort of unity. One does not expect that because he realises the difficulty of making a logical statement without a subject and a predicate he will more readily understand Dalton's law of multiple ratios, or that the angles of a triangle must equal two right angles. On the contrary it is quite correct grammar for the angles of a triangle to equal two thousand right angles. Grammar is satisfied, if there is a subject and predicate, whether they make sense or nonsense ; and further, in the drawing up of grammatical ' laws ', the actual uses of the English language enforce so many exceptions that law may appear a rather imperfect approximation to itself. These objections, however, may not be as formidable as they sound. The surmise that there is another aspect to language than that of making sense, that such a solid-sounding word as ' concrete ' may have another self, intangible but no less important to thought, this might become part of a general attitude—a respect, as



it were, for a logical idea in contrast to a sensational experience. How far such an attitude would extend, when the object of conscious attention was not expression in words itself, is difficult to say. Would it, for example, affect a boy engaged in titration who wished that the liquid he had in a flask would give an acid reaction, when he knew that, if his weighings were correct, it was impossible by the law of equivalence ?

And, further, may not the difficulty in arriving at grammatical laws make him cautious of putting too high a value on generalisations in other subjects, which are more imposing than valid ?

In other words, would a course in grammar be of such profit to his feeling for language as would justify the time spent on it ? There is no doubt that it helps him in learning another language, unless completely 'direct' methods are used ; or the language is based on a dissimilar thought foundation. Even in two languages such as Latin and English, where the one is very much inflected and composite in form, the other little inflected and resolved, their common logical and psychological antecedents make it possible to use the syntax of one as a means of discovering the word meaning of the other. Although a Latin and English sentence, expressing the same idea, may have entirely different word order, their word-controls are similar : a word in one language which is recognisable as a verb cannot be used as a pronoun in the other. And it is obviously useful, when one has only an incomplete knowledge of the meaning of words, to have a grammatical pattern as an aid to deciding on a significant context.

But in English an adult rarely, except in abstruse philosophical reasoning or legal documents or Joycean novelties, looks to the grammatical relations of words as a clue to their meaning—at least consciously. Unconsciously, however, it must be difficult not to use the grammatical pattern of words as an ever-present automatic guide to their meaning. Even though one can express one's meaning very forcibly and clearly in ungrammatical speech, it is still speech based on grammatical implications ; it is not speech—except for limited emotional occasions—in which there is no familiar substructure of rules.

The question then is, whether conscious analysis of those rules will lead to greater precision and dexterity of expression. There seems to be only one answer to this ; that skilful practice of any kind, in which one acts unawares, as it is the result of conscious effort at some time, is only improved when further conscious effort becomes practice unawares. I exclude from skilful practice mere reflex actions. This is the justification of all work of the *précis* type : conscious analysis leading to precision of thought ; and in grammar, in some ways, one reaches the acme of that process. In *précis* one analyses word-references—a familiar world : in grammar the form and order of words themselves—a strange symbolic world. And it seems probable that the power to feel as well as to recognise the difference between these two verbal states will lead to greater discrimination in the use of words. Whether that power may be increased, depends on the methods used. One knows so little of the mind that it is difficult to attempt more than a general surmise about the effect

of grammar on ways of expression. But if there is any order of emergence in thought-word groups, if the pattern which thought assumes, when it becomes verbal, is not made instantaneously, then grammatical analysis should make for quicker adaptation of word contexts to intended meaning. The nearest thing to instantaneous expression is to be found in a response to unexpected sensation. A cry of pain, for example. There is no pattern of thought in that. Next to it in speed is the verbal response to some kinds of emotional crisis. An immediate hot-tempered repartee, for example. Here the meaning is often obscured by the failure to produce a recognisable pattern of words. It would seem, then, that the delay would come partly from failure to find a context of words with appropriate reference at the same time as finding a grammatical form for them : in which case, difficulty with grammatical form would not merely delay expression but also interfere with the adjustment of context to intention ; and when thoughts are connected with complex emotional conditions, together with complex intellectual references, such delay and interference would be still greater.

If one believes, then, that a systematic course of grammar should be given, and not given before a boy naturally becomes a critical thinker, what grammar should be undertaken before that time ? The minimum of classification necessary for explaining faults or difficulties in composition. In the earliest stages correction can be made without reference to general terms : that is, without any periods spent on grammar alone. If a boy says ' The sparrow eat the worm slow,

what it caught with her beak', he can be shown that it is customary to say 'The sparrow slowly ate the worm, which it caught with its beak'. And if that does not convince him, he will find sooner or later that he has difficulty in being understood, and he may come to the conclusion that in order to be understood people try to agree about the words they use.

But when constructions become more complicated, for economy's sake general terms become necessary. One may explain an error in time, for example, by reference to the meaning of a statement alone: but similar mistakes can only be corrected economically by reference to the general term verb. And for the thorough understanding of such terms periods must be set aside.

The minimum of such necessary terms is or are the parts of speech<sup>1</sup> and the subject and predicate of the sentence. The simpler the method, the better. One wants the boy to recognise the terms rather than understand them. A simple designation is given; to do this, intelligible examples have to be used. To give, for instance, the word noun a meaning, one must begin with extending the usual meaning of name. In the sentence 'Look, this room has a door'—actually when we look, what we see is four walls round us, a floor below and a ceiling above; and in one corner 'a flat piece of wood hanging on hinges', but it would not be convenient to have to say, when we wished for more fresh air, 'please open the flat piece of wood hanging on hinges': so we give it a kind of name, the

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of convenience I use this phrase in its traditional sense, i.e., referring to nouns, verbs, etc.

word 'door'; and the room likewise. These are not special names like Mary or John, which only belong to special boys and girls; we do not as a rule call one door Mary and another John: but use one name for them all, doors, whether they are made of oak or deal or iron. But when we want to speak of all things which have names, we have not time to recite all the names, doors, rooms, tables, desks, and so on: so we invent another word, which means just a name, whether it is the name of a door, a room or a desk, and that word is 'noun'. So a door is a noun, a room is a noun, John and Mary are nouns, all alike nouns. And other examples are given. And then the spotting of nouns in a written passage begins. And it is from this exercise that the class makes sure of knowing a noun when it sees one: not from the preliminary explanations.

The spotting of parts of speech is usually interesting—as Arnold observed. It has the interest of either a game of chance or of a sure exhibition of skill; and if a child has not the instinct of a born gambler or a born politician, one can stimulate his interest by the use of distinctive colours, or distinctive shapes, like 'triangles for nouns and squares for verbs; and let him compose sentences on various models, triangle square triangle, square triangle, triangle square and so on.

But if one feels that the boy is capable of more analytical thought than this allows him, I am inclined to think that it should be analysis well seasoned with synthesis, and certainly kept very close to a concrete setting. It is true that many boys about ten enjoy making up fantastic languages, to be spoken by an aristocracy of two or three only, or more widely, are

interested in codes.' This making of a special language might be allied to grammar. It is important that grammar should not be a thing which leaves a bad flavour in the mouth, and spoils a taste for its treatment later. Therefore as too ambitious analysis has the danger of being premature and sterile, it should be not too obvious. It might be an unpretentious but important incident in the problem of making a language: and this might be given the setting of a Desert Island, with its habitual appeal: an island, for example, on which picture writing was discovered in a cave, or on which some illiterate pirate had left a very confused clue to the position of treasure. In picture writing the difficulty begins, when one wishes to economise monotonous effort by the invention of symbols: but if anyone cares to make the experiment, he will find that grammatical problems are being explored by explorers, who feel they are after something of use and value; and incidentally the impression may be gained that words, and even letters, are not such unimportant things as they sometimes seem.

For the systematic course proper I would favour the making of a grammar, the boys discovering what they can about language from the way in which their own mind seems to work, and reasoning about those discoveries.

The following is a rough sketch of the lines such constructive work might take. First, revision of the sentence and parts of speech. These they have classified; they should now enquire into the logical nature of that classification.

Possible method: Ask half a dozen boys to put into

words the first idea that comes into their heads : the words should give a clear meaning to the rest of the class. Write on B.B. three or four of the simplest, which are in sentence form. Ask for their chief common characteristics ; there will probably be no similarity in content, only in verbal structure—the presence of a subject and predicate, usually noun and verb. Leaving the sentence aside for the time being, turn to these two parts of speech.

(1) Noun, already known as a name for a person or thing, or possibly a word denoting a person or thing : that is, a word symbol. Its function should now be examined with a view to making a consciously clear distinction between the word itself and the idea or thing which it represents. The boy, for example, should be able to recognise that when he says to another ‘ I have seen a hare ’—besides conveying a definite meaning, he is also using a very convenient substitute for what he has actually seen ; that, in fact, nobody can see a hare ; they see on a particular day something which has long ears and runs in circles : and others also see on particular days other things which have long ears and run in circles. So they conclude that they have seen things of the same kind, and for convenience call those things hares ; but though this, that and the other hare are visible, there is still no such thing visible as a hare, except the written words ‘ a hare ’, marks on a piece of paper—the thing we call a noun.

With this end in view—that is, simple discrimination between words and that to which they refer,—one might pin on the blackboard a poppy, and an artificial

poppy, and write next to them the word poppy : the class might then consider whether these three are alike in any respect, or in what they differ. If the actual poppy, for example, were to be represented by  $x$ , is there any meaning of  $x$  such that it could also represent the other two ? If  $x$  meant something visible or something having shape, it would apply to all three. To how many of them would it apply if it meant a thing having a certain shape or a thing referring to a poppy ? I give these sample questions as one possible way of provoking the kind of answer which itself will be the real basis of discussion ; the purpose of the discussion being to make the boy feel the convenience and wonder of having something—which he knows already as a word and a noun,—able, though it has no resemblance in shape, yet by an arrangement of letters to bring to his mind some other visible object. Further, he knows that a noun is a naming word : that the word ‘ poppy ’ names the anonymous object ‘ poppy ’—itself a mere circular red shape, with radial shadows and crinkly texture. Then write on the board, ‘ Think of a ———’, drawing in the blank space the rough outline of a rose. Some of the class may think of a cabbage, others a daisy, according to the appearance of the drawing. Then instead of the drawing put the word ‘ rose ’, and tell the class to be ready to describe or name what that word calls to mind. Then produce a rose, and see how many of the boys were actually thinking of that particular rose. A few may have happened to think of a rose of the same name. It is obvious then that if the word ‘ rose ’ is a name, it is the name of more than the object rose. But if the object



rose is called a rose, and it is unlike most of the roses thought of by the class, how can they have the same name? Probably there will be no satisfactory answer to this question. Then, putting up the rose by the poppy, get the class to give them a single name—flower. It is correct, then, to say ‘this poppy is a flower’? Is flower, then, the name of the poppy? Obviously not, as may be shown by reference to the rose. But it is a noun, a naming word. What then is it the name of? Nothing or something? Something which includes both this poppy and this rose, and also all poppies and roses, and tulips, carnations and so on and so on. Has anyone ever seen a flower of that kind? We see one red shape and call it poppy, another white shape and call it rose: we do not see something, which has five red petals and twenty white petals; and yet we say there is such a thing and we call it a flower.

Now supposing there were no such name as flower; and someone came into the room with a closed basket containing poppies, roses, antirrhinums, marigolds and dahlias: and he was asked what the basket was full of—he could not truthfully answer poppies or roses, or any of the other things in the basket. Suppose he answered  $x$ , what would  $x$  have to mean if it was to answer the question truthfully? Something with petals, fastened to stalks, but without roots and so on. How then would he create this  $x$ ? By reasoning about what he had seen. The poppy on the board is something seen or smelt or touched. This  $x$ —or to give it a name, flower—is also a thing; but a thing produced by thought, an idea of a particular kind. The eye

presents us with flowers of every shape and colour, all different ; even two roses are different ; one is one rose, and one another. But if every rose is different how are we to know what is a rose and what not ? Or if every flower is different to the eye, how are we to know what is a flower and what not ? We can only get that knowledge by discovering something which is the same in all these different shapes and colours. That thing we call a flower. So by thinking about what we have observed we find resemblances ; that is, things which reason tells us are the same, no matter how different to the eye they may appear. For example, all the poppies, roses, marigolds and so on we have ever seen, all have petals. We have not seen all the petals : we have seen some, and imagined or reasoned out the rest. By thinking we have discovered a resemblance. And having collected as many such resemblances as possible, we put them together in one thought and one word—a flower.

A flower then is an idea, a thing we have thought, with a definite meaning for us ; it is an idea, which refers to countless things of different colour and shapes, seen or smelt or touched : it is also a word and name. And as a name, it belongs to a class of words, much greater than the class of things, to which it—the word flower—refers. As the name rose refers to few things compared with the name flower, so the name flower refers to few things compared with the name—noun. For a noun is an idea in the form of a word—‘ a part of speech ’ so called, since we speak in words—referring without exception to any word which is the name of any known or imaginable thing, animate or inanimate.

In this last paragraph I have condensed ideas which in actual procedure would need expanding, if a class was to understand them, that is, secure them to itself by reasoning. They may be too difficult, even resolved into simple question and answer, for the boy of thirteen : but I feel they are worth the experiment, subject to one condition, that the simplification of procedure should not be baulked by the stinting of time.

As exercises, each boy might describe in writing any two things of his own choice, such that they can be given, when read, the same name by the rest of the class.

And a list of words might be given, and the class be asked to arrange them in a genealogical table according to the meaning of the things they refer to : at the top, whatever is of widest meaning, at the bottom, whatever of most special meaning. Take such a list as : tiger, daisy, Noah, winter, world, pilchard, mankind, animal, lavender, fish, race, hero, flower, thing, Ireland, leaf, Mongols, heroism, limb, tin, London, scent, goblin—or a simpler and shorter list, if necessary. But there are advantages in a certain degree of difficulty, as the classification has more value as a basis for argument than as the neat production of a diagram.

To resume, everything we see, hear, touch, feel, know, imagine, think, must, if we are to speak or write it, be put into a word ; and all such words are nouns. Could we speak in nouns alone, and make ourselves understood ? Admitted that there are parts of speech, as the class knows, verbs, adjectives, etc., and subjects and predicates. We can still ask the question, Are

they necessary, or are they merely inventions made for the purpose of writing grammar books? I would suggest that the grammar course, whatever its variations, should be developed as an enquiry into the practical need for certain types of words and definite relations between them.

Could we, then, make ourselves understood by the use of nouns alone? Take a simple description: 'Friend writer writer country; larks gaiety song sky; man plough horse horse horse; proximity sheep motion patch turnips patch turnips; friend writer question writer number sheep; writer speech ignorance.' And let the class write out the sense of it. They may succeed in translating it as: 'A friend and I were in the country. Larks were singing gaily in the sky; a man was ploughing with three horses; nearby sheep were being moved from one patch of turnips to another. My friend asked me, how many sheep there were. I said I did not know'—fortunately for the length of the passage. But even if some arrive at this sense, others will probably vary from it; and some may not arrive at anything. And all will probably agree that it is not a convenient way of writing: and if a piece of reasoning were transcribed in nouns, they would change 'not convenient' into 'impossible'.

From the method suggested in this passage one can explore in, I think, an interesting and convincing way the practical need for different types of words—the known 'parts of speech'—if we are to make our meaning clear, and our habits of thought being what they are. My own first development from it would be towards the verb, as a way of connecting the static and

isolated elements of a noun world—though I do not infer that verbs were invented before prepositions.

Among the nouns used in the passage above there are distinct points which the class should be able to discover : (1) The difference in type between larks, sky, man, horse, turnips and writers, song, motion, speech, ignorance ; that is, in order to describe the whole scene in nouns one has to use nouns which are derived already from verbs—write, sing, move, speak, ignore. (2) Among the nouns there are some which are themselves commonly used as verbs—sky, man, plough, patch, question, number ; and if the class tried to invent a passage of nouns, they would discover the difficulty of keeping only to those which in common usage are not also used as verbs. The transference of function from one part of speech to another will re-appear later. But for the moment we are concerned with the need for another type of word than the noun, and the way in which the verb forces itself into speech either openly or under disguise.

One method of treating this point would be to make the class reduce a given sentence to the minimum beyond which it ceased to be a sentence : for example, ' St. George grooming his horse for the morrow's fray listened without a qualm to the dragon lashing its tail round the castle walls.' The class should write down the words or phrases in the order in which they think elimination ought to be made, being prepared to give reasons for their choice. These reasons would be based probably on a mixed reference to meaning and grammatical connection, derived from their previous knowledge of subject and predicate : and the various results

would themselves lead to interesting points of discussion. Suppose that 'George listened' was an approved minimum; and further examples showed that in writing, at least, a noun (or pronoun) and a verb were usually indispensable to the making of a sentence; then one might turn attention to this new type of word, the verb, and along with it, to a fuller examination of what is meant by a sentence. Suppose the class put themselves in the position of a people, who have named a world of things and who try to communicate by statement or question with words of one type—the noun; and one of their number suggests the experiment of trying another type of word—the verb, so that instead of 'George ear' 'George listened' should be used to convey the intended idea, what important new development in language has he made? One may say that he has invented the verb, but that is only to give a name to the thing he has done. What is the thing itself? The class should be able to suggest that he has connected George and the ear with time. They probably will not be able to suggest, but they should be able to understand, certain important inferences to be made from this fact, as that (1) one may have a world of named things and yet by the words corresponding to them be unable to express any ideas about the world in which one actually lives: because that world is not made up of entirely fixed and isolated things, but of things which are all connected in some way and related to one another. A world of nouns, on the other hand, does not state any connection, even though one may imagine that connections are there; one may imagine, for example, that in the two words 'George ear' either

George has an ear or uses an ear, or there is simply an ear of a Georgian kind, whatever that may be ; but it is all very vague, and whatever the connection may be, though it is here stated in the present time or tense, there is nothing in the words ' George ear ' to suggest time at all.

So all things being connected—and if the class doubt that, let them try to suggest things that are devoid of connection with anything else—these connections cannot be expressed without words which connect ideas with one another. And as all that we do is done at some particular time—and this again the class can verify—it is important to have one connection between ideas which relates them to time. That is one function of the verb.

Incidentally it may be pointed out that this time connection between ideas itself becomes a thing, and is given a name ; the verb supplies a new noun. The convenience of using such a type of noun may be shown by examples. Take for instance ' rotation ' as in rotation of crops, and see how its meaning could be otherwise expressed in such a sentence as ' modern agriculture began with the rotation of crops '.

In the noun derived from the verb it may be noticed that though the idea of a time succession survives, the reference to this or that particular time has gone ; but whether this point is arrived at through the verbal noun or not, it is bound to emerge in considering a second function of the verb : its being essential to the completion of a standard sentence. The class may have memorised the fact that a sentence is the expression of a complete thought. It is now the time to

enquire into the meaning of the two teasing words, complete thought. The enquiry is not easy, but it is better to try to connect these words with something which the boy feels, however dimly, to be real, than to leave them as mere grammatical counters, stamped by a higher authority.

Suppose the class are given a list of words such as

grey wolves  
very desperate  
wolves are near  
wolves and wolves  
tracks in the snow  
was trapped  
the horse fell

and are asked to say which make sentences. They will probably choose the third and seventh : either because they know that a sentence must have a subject and predicate or because nouns and verbs are the only two parts of speech of which a special study has been so far made. It is possible, also, that some may suggest that these only make a complete idea. And one can develop such a suggestion on the lines that if anyone says ' grey wolves ' or ' tracks in the snow ', we know what they are thinking about, but we still wait for something else to make their thoughts complete to us. On the other hand, if anyone says ' the horse ' and then ' fell ', they put before us an idea which rouses our expectations and then add something which, though it may not complete all we want to know about the horse, is under any conditions at least the complete statement of a fact concerning it : whether it is



a fact in a story or in an actual happening. The horse did something at some time. It was a horse which existed somewhere. 'Grey wolves' is just a thought in the speaker's mind, which remains with no connection outside that kind of wolf: but 'the horse fell' is a thought in which the name of the thing 'horse' is connected with a word expressing an action, and this connection is a thought, which has a meaning not confined to the speaker's mind. The speaker has told us something definite about something.

But suppose that the list of words had been

wolves !

Man in snow

desperate ?

horse down

**WOLVES !!**

Shouts through the dark wood

lights !

rescue ?

Yes.

There is no verb in this list ; and yet if a sentence is the expression of a complete thought, these must be sentences : for they give us a picture of a series of events. From their juxtaposition to one another they trace out a series of complete thoughts.

Must we then admit that we were wrong in supposing that a verb is a necessary part of a sentence : or only that under certain circumstances we can make our meaning clear without the use of sentences, that is, without the use of complete thoughts ? Supposing

that the class sees the distinction between these alternatives, and decides for the second, we are faced with the question that if meaning is clear without grammatical constraints, grammatical conventions may seem to be of doubtful value : to be an arbitrary way of divorcing words from real things.

Although one must recognise that the grammatical heresies of one generation may be the orthodoxies of the next, and that grammar is the servant of meaning, not meaning of grammar ; yet one must not conclude too much from a single type of expression. It is possible that some boy may suggest that the instances given are not the expression of thought at all, and therefore one would not expect sentences. Such an attempt to distinguish between the emotive and logical use of words would demand sympathetic and careful analysis. Supposing that, as a result, the class recognised that to express the emotions one had to observe other ways of treating words than in the expression of logical processes of thought, then they might attempt to express on paper emotional events without the use of verbs—after the model above—and criticise the adequacy of each other's attempts ; then they might try to introduce a condition, the idea of ' if ' into those events and still keep out verbs, as far as possible : and then they might take such a passage as the following, which has something more than logic in it, and express it without verbs :

When he beheld his shadow in a brooke,  
The fishes spred on it their golden gils :  
When he was by, the birds such pleasure tooke

That some would sing, some other in their bills  
Would bring him mulberries and ripe red cherries,  
He fed them with his sight, they him with berries '—

or other passages of still greater emotional intensity.

And though they might not recognise that emotional intensity is by no means a thing apart from logical reflection, they would probably come to think that the verb is under most circumstances a necessary part of a standard sentence ; and through the difficulties of trying to do without it, might understand more clearly why it is indispensable : as for example, because (1) it is a connecting word of more fluid form and applicability than others, and yet very exact in the relations it makes : because (2) it can express change, as from one point of time to another, and so, as one is very frequently speaking and writing of the actual world in which we live, and in that world everything is changing in time and also in space or in time-space, the verb, being the type of word invented to express change, gives the noun a connection with the real world : the noun and the verb together make a statement about the world as we know it. Take the words ' the man with an iron pipe the molten mass into a hollow bulb '. Here another kind of connection is introduced—the preposition, a type of word which can suggest an enormous range of relations between thing and thing. It can suggest that one thing is related to another in space, or time, by movement, direction, in fact, in almost as many ways as we can think of things being connected with one another. (This can be investigated by examples either here or later.) And yet in spite

of its being used in the words 'the man with an iron pipe the molten mass into a hollow bulb', and though it connects one idea with another, it still leaves the whole thought incomplete. The ideas are connected with each other, but they are not connected with our idea of the world, as a world existing in time, and only very slightly with our idea of the world as a place where something is always happening. And to one who had never seen or read of glass-blowing the words would mean little. But if the word 'blew' were added, he would have a definite idea of something which took place. The other ideas would then with the help of this verb express a complete thought: that is, a real fact, relative to the particular plane of references concerned.

In the above example, we have a slightly different use of the verb as a connection from that in the example 'George fell'. In 'George fell' the verb expresses a connection between a thing and an action; and thereby completes our thought. But in 'the man blew the mass' the verb expresses a connection between an action and two things, and in this particular instance, the thought would not be complete unless the action connected with the one thing were connected with the other thing named. The use of the verb in the first instance is called intransitive, in the second transitive, and the thing to which the action is transferred is known as the object of the verb. The class should suggest examples of verbs which can only be used transitively or intransitively and see if they can discover anything about the character of such verbs.

To return to the glass-blower—if instead of 'blew' or 'blows' or 'is blowing', etc., simply the word

'blow' were used, then the sense would disappear again—even though the class were told that 'blow' was a verb and not a noun. The verb, even in English, has many forms, as the class can see from any page of print, but only those which express time past, present or future, and so are limited or finite, can bring the named thing or noun, its subject, into our idea of any existing world. 'The old horse fell' makes sense to us, because the horse's change of position is thought of as taking place at some time or other. The same cannot be said of 'the old horse fall'; and yet both fall and fell equally contain the idea of a change of position. Perhaps an intelligent boy might challenge this argument. So much the better. Supposing that either on his own initiative or in answer to a question he suggests the sentence 'the old horse never falls', and claims that there is a sentence, in which the verb although it looks as if it refers to the present actually refers to no particular time at all; and yet in spite of that the thought is complete.

The obvious answer to this is that 'never falls' is a kind of present. And this somewhat loose answer may be followed by pointing out that, strictly speaking, one cannot express the present of any action, because while one is still speaking, some part of the action has already become past; but it would be very inconvenient if one were inventing a language to have no means of referring to the present; a language in which everything either has happened or is going to happen, but never is happening, makes any continuity of action or being impossible to express; and we cannot live in a world in which it is impossible to say 'We are alive'. So

the present time of the verb is not usually restricted to the present moment of time. And, having relaxed so far, those who gradually made the language went still further ; they used the present tense of the verb without any reference to a particular time. This was forced on them by circumstances. If the class have watched an express pass through a station, they would have no difficulty in describing what they saw, with verbs referring to a certain time ; but if besides describing what they saw, they also gave an opinion about it, they might use some such sentences as ' steam is a powerful thing ', or ' the rear coach of a train always sways more than any other '. In these statements they would either not be thinking of time ; or only of all time, as though it were a continuous state without past, present or future. And it would be worth their while to see how often the present tense of the verb ' to be ' is used in that way : probably the most commonly used verb in all languages familiar to the Western mind. It would seem that just as those who made those languages invented a type of word—the verb—to connect their ideas with time, so that they could express what was happening in the world round about them, so they also chose the same type of word, in spite of its reference to time, to express things which had no reference to time, but which were just as real to them,—simply because the verb was the one word which they felt connected ideas with existence, with the world which was real to them. They invented the verb ' to be ' because they felt a need to say simply that things ' are ', meaning that they exist ; and they found this so convenient that they used its present tense to

express not only existence without reference to particular times, but also something more. Let the class consider the following examples, put them into groups according to the meaning of the verb 'is' or 'are', and explain variations in that meaning :

- (1) in such business  
Action is eloquence.
- (2) There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
- (3) This is Illyria, lady.
- (4) These Moors are changeable in their wills ;
- (5) There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune ;
- (6) And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive.
- (7) There are more things in heaven and earth,  
Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
- (8) Here is the scroll of every man's name.

In three examples at the utmost will they find that the verb refers to existence. What does it mean in the rest ? It is just a connection, but a particular type of connection : very like the two parallel lines =. The above statements the class may recognise as Shakespeare's. If they find them easier to deal with, they can give examples of their own. Suppose these are of the type 'twenty is a number', 'oil is greasy', 'the white house is empty', and possibly 'beauty is truth'. They may more easily recognise from these examples that those who make these statements are not attempting to tell us that oil or the white house or beauty exists.

They are informing us of the greasiness of oil or the emptiness of the white house, or the truth properties of beauty. Now, when they do this, in their own minds oil and greasiness or beauty and truth are not separate ideas of two things, but a single idea of one thing, which one might write oil-grease, or beauty-truth, with a hyphen. But in order to let us know what they are thinking about this hyphenated idea, they have to split it into two separate words. In the case of oil and greasiness they wish to tell us that oil has the property of greasiness, in the case of beauty and truth that both these things are the same. Is it enough then just to put the two words side by side, oil greasy or beauty truth? Should we know that one is the subject and the other the predicate? In Latin and Greek and even in English that is sometimes considered a sufficient guide. Keats added after 'beauty is truth' 'truth beauty'. But usually to show that two or more words are expressing such a hyphenated idea, that is, expressing a logical judgment, a part of the verb 'to be' is used. Oil is greasy. Beauty is truth, etc. One may then ask why a verb should be used when it is not a matter of time, and why the verb 'to be' when it is not a matter of existence. As we have seen, the verb is that part of a sentence which, in completing the expression of a thought, connects the fixed world of named things with the moving world round about us, and so makes them real to us. But as we all have different experiences every day, we each would live in a different world, unless in all these different changes of experience from one minute to another we could find something that remains the same. And it is as important that



what remains the same should be expressed in as real a way as what changes. 'The *Berengaria* left Southampton yesterday' we feel to be a real bit of the world of experience, a fact : but it is only the happening of a moment, it cannot happen again, and a world of such single happenings would be a chaos : unless one could also in making statements such as 'beauty is truth' or 'man is immortal', feel them to be no less real. And so the use of the same part of speech—the verb—both for what takes or has taken place in time, and for what may only be imagined to exist apart from time.

Though the verb conveys a sense of reality, it does not follow that only those statements which express what we regard to be true are sentences. One man may say 'These are grey wolves', another 'These are green wolves'. We know one to be true, we suspect the other to be false : but apparently it appeared true to the man who made the statement ; and whether we consider that it is true or false, sense or nonsense, it is grammatically a sentence.

So much for explaining the adoption of the verb as a part of speech. I have probably pushed the enquiry further than could be made explicit to the boy of fourteen : but, as I said in introducing the subject of grammar, my aim is rather to suggest possibilities to the teacher, from which he may create a method of his own than to give him a ready-made procedure. One may learn even from the impracticable.

Of the other parts of speech a similar treatment may be made ; that is, one may suggest their claim to a place in language by seeing what would happen if one tried to do without them, and working as much as

possible through experimental examples invented by the class. After the noun and verb, probably the adjective should be taken next, as its treatment will be a continuation of that of the noun. On the analogy of adverb, adnoun would seem a better name for this type of word. One approach to the adjective would be to imagine that one was at a stage in language in which only noun and verb were the two types of words yet invented. How definite could one make the subject of a sentence under these conditions? Suppose one took as a theme—hens lay eggs. This is true enough, but suppose one wants to know which of the many millions of hens that lay eggs lay such and such eggs. One could say Leghorn hens lay eggs; here one is still using one noun to make another noun more select—there are fewer Leghorn hens than hens; hens are a whole of which Leghorn hens are only a part; you know more about Leghorn hens than hens: you know that they have the quality of being Leghorn hens. So it is possible to use one noun as an adjective that is either a selective or a qualifying word to another noun. And one can go further and say Brown's (which would need explanation) prize Leghorn hens lay eggs. So far one seems to be getting on well without any special type of word to qualify a noun. But Leghorn hens are of different colours, white, black and buff: and though these words are used as nouns, they were probably invented as adjectives; but suppose that with a touch of malice you wished to say that Brown's hens lay small eggs,—how are you going to substitute a noun for that word 'small' which is obviously not a noun? Or if you wished to say that there is a difference

in size in the eggs of Brown's hens compared with those of Smith's, and not to the advantage of Brown, what noun is going to do that for you? A noun is the name of a thing, and a thing is a thing, not more or less of a thing, even if you could put a comparative ending to it like—er. An egg is an egg, though one weighs one ounce and the other two. One is heavier than the other, one has the quality of heaviness in a greater degree than the other, but one could not be for that reason an egg, and the other anegger, because though all eggs have weight, it is not weight that gives them their identity as eggs. It is the qualifying word that must bear the mark of comparison, and though a noun may be used as a qualifying word, one cannot compare the qualities of things unless one has a special type of word attached to the noun.

The need for an adjective will also be found when one is making statements about a thing in terms of its qualities. Sunshine is pleasant, elephants are intelligent and so on—to replace these adjectives by nouns would make such chaos with sense and knowledge that it is worth exploring the reason, that is, the confusion between things and qualities. To say that elephants are intelligence would compel one to admit that all wise men possessed elephants, and even a dull class might feel that that was rather queer.

The class might try their hand at classifying adjectives and inventing titles for them according to the main needs which they satisfied; and also be introduced to the convenience of the definite and indefinite article, with some reference to their absence in Latin.

Probably adverbs should be dealt with next. They

may provide an easier interlude. Pronouns seem to be an obvious case of convenience : but not for that reason any too tractable to explanation. They and their derivatives replace nouns and noun equivalents. If language compelled us to put our thoughts thus, ' Jack bought a greyhound. Jack trained the greyhound, but when the greyhound did not win a race, Jack gave the greyhound to Jack's aunt to go with the aunt's bath-chair ', or ' Smith said the weather was going to be fine, and Brown denied the weather was going to be fine ', our statements would involve a considerable waste of time ; and when we wished to ask for information instead of giving it, we should be in a quandary : for there is no purpose in asking for the name of a thing, if we use it in forming the question. Without the word ' what ' one could only discover Jack's purchase in the above example by saying, ' Did Jack buy . . . ? ' and then either name all the conceivable things he might have bought or hope that our informant would supply the answer quickly. This might be merely inconvenient. But if we wished to say, what is nothing ? there seems to be no equivalent way of expressing the question—unless we regard nothing as a noun ; but if we regard a noun as a name of a thing, it is difficult to regard it also as the name of that which is not a thing.

An interrogative pronoun appears then to be a necessity in a language. It may be said that it is ill named ; that it cannot replace a noun, because there is no named thing in the speaker's mind, when he asks a question ; but, at least, it has all the functions of a potential noun.

The other type of pronoun noted above is usually called personal. In the sense that it may refer to a person, it is no more personal than the relative pronoun ; and no less than the relative, it may refer to things entirely impersonal. So it seems a misnomer : but possibly its origin was the very important step of substituting for the name of the speaker a word which was not a name, but which referred to him just as distinctly as a name, so long as he was speaking ; and this convenient short cut was a pronoun genuinely referring to what might be called in every sense a first person. The second person was the person addressed, and if a statement was the first type of sentence, a question was probably a close second, and the needs of having a pronoun for the person thus addressed would become urgent. And so on to the third member in this connection, which might be he, she or it—and those who invented the name personal pronoun must have felt that it was not worth while disturbing a definition which had a justifiable value,—for the sake of an ‘ it ’.

The relative pronoun—to mention only one other type—though its convenience may be readily shown by examples, may take one further in explanation than one wishes to go at this stage. Incidentally, if personal is a confused, relative is a latitudinous designation. The class may begin by connecting two such sentences as ‘ We bought a Friesian cow. The cow gave 7 gallons of milk a day ’—noting that, in making the connection, they have slightly altered the sense : they have changed the original emphasis contained in the double thought. Then they may invent sentences illustrating the use

of every relative pronoun they know. When these are examined, to make clear the nature of this pronoun—it will be found that to understand it, some account will have to be taken of the structure of the sentence in the expression of a complex thought; and this may trespass too much on what is for later treatment: namely sentence structure or the conditions under which parts of speech are used. For example, take this instance: ‘Mrs Turner, who is often at Court, do tell me to-day that for certain the Queen hath much changed her humour, and is become very pleasant, and sociable as any’. Here Pepys had in mind various things—which formed a limit of thought: Mrs Turner’s presence at Court and her information about the Queen’s humour and so on. In finding words for this, he takes Mrs Turner’s telling him something as the nucleus of his ideas, and so the rest of the sentence is dependent on the verb tell; but that omits the fact of Mrs Turner’s presence at Court. What is he to do? He can say, ‘Mrs Turner is often at Court, and Mrs Turner do tell me for certain that, etc.’ But he does not intend to give the same emphasis to Mrs Turner’s being at Court as to her giving him information. So he brackets it by making a relative clause of it, and he does more than that: he uses the relative clause, which grammatically qualifies Mrs Turner and we must therefore call adjectival, practically as an adverbial clause; for ‘who is often at Court’ neither particularises one Mrs Turner out of many nor is one of the essential qualities without which Mrs Turner would cease to be Mrs Turner, but rather it suggests that Mrs Turner tells him something on credible grounds, or

tells him and he can believe it because she is often at Court. Compare with this : ' God, who truly knows me, knows that I am nothing : *for* He only beholds me and all the world who looks not on us through a derived ray, etc.'

Perhaps I pay too much heed here to one particular instance, but it is an instance of a kind not unlikely to appear in boys' suggestions. And, at any rate, it raises the problem of distinguishing between a relative pronoun and a conjunction ; and the question, how far at this stage one is prepared to go with the complex sentence.

The pronoun in the sense of anticipating a potential named thing seems to be a sign of that point in the growth of language which corresponds with a definite scientific attitude of mind ; and it may be worth while to make a digression from it and examine the necessity for generic terms other than the most generic of named things.

Having now nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs—we may take a handful of these terms and see whether other parts of speech are a necessity or a luxury. Supposing that the class is confronted with lists of words, such as :

Four make three seven.

They winter house hill spring rivers lived two  
horse granary beans so broke died ate it many.

Water cylinder heads nails inches one half it is  
distilled poured stands.

Let them arrange them, so that they will make sense, by using (1) as few extra words as possible and (2) as

many as they feel give the best effect—the definite and indefinite articles being used without condition.

From an examination of the results one will find types of words, which are made to connect ideas, as their main function—conjunctions, prepositions, and in the course of developing further examples some adverbs may also be included. A careful attempt should be made to define the distinguishing characteristics of these connections ; both as between and within the types. And the results of such an attempt should be genuinely elicited from the examples taken, and not consist of ready-made importations from textbooks : even though the results do not seem so convincingly definite.

It might make the preposition more than a word to be memorised if one suggested that the class should select what they considered to be the six relations between things—apart from those provided by the verb—most likely to have been first used by human beings.

As with the relative pronoun, investigation of the conjunction takes one into the analysis of groups of ideas : not, it is true, before one has dealt with the functions of words, but before one has dealt with the transference of function from one type of word to another. That depends on whether prepositions are taken before conjunctions or not. If prepositions are taken first as a special study, it seems that one would do well to refer to transference of function ; for it is possible that by avoiding reference to the adjectival and adverbial functions of the prepositional phrase one would be handicapped in one's treatment of the pre-



position ; and having a group of words, the phrase, able to take the place of a single word, one would be justified in introducing the idea of the clause also.

Finally, the class should have no difficulty in supplying the eighth part of speech.

On some of the parts of speech I have written at greater length than is proportionate with treating of grammar as a section of English teaching ; but it is my hope that the more detailed treatment of those parts will be a sufficient clue to the kind of treatment I would suggest as an aim for a teacher in dealing with syntax, or the use of the parts of speech in a sentence. For on this topic I must confine myself to a very brief outline.

After coming into possession of eight parts of speech, each with defined functions, one would next consider their use. If they were eight coins of different value, they would have to have that value well marked in their appearance, as for example, the sovereign, half-sovereign, crown, half-crown, florin, shilling, sixpence and threepenny-bit. If one were inventing a language, and at much labour devised the idea of a noun and a verb and so forth, presumably one would stamp the words in the language as it were, each with a special die, according as it was noun, verb and so on. But turning to English, one finds that word for word, nouns might be verbs, adjectives adverbs and so on. Bird, cart, steak, end in *d*, *t* and *k*. So do gird, start, break. And consider inhale, ale, pale ; sweet, sleet, greet ; fully, bully ; quickly, sickly. With different parts of speech so like each other in appearance, is it strange that a noun should be used as a verb, if it conveyed the sense required ? The class should supply what

they consider to be interesting instances of change of function.

If a language can be successful without having the fixed character of a coinage, at least it must be used under some fixed conditions. At chess a pawn may become a queen, but it cannot then move as though it were a knight. And if a player developed the game on such original lines, one would have difficulty in playing with him. The game has to be played according to agreed rules. Similarly the expression of thought must be made under certain rules of language. But the analogy between a game of chess and the expression of thought cannot be pressed too far, for in the game each player observes the rules, as a necessary means to reducing his opponent to inactivity, whereas in speech each speaker is usually prepared to give the other as much latitude as possible, provided he can understand him. If a class were asked what it is that controls the use of the parts of speech in a sentence, many of them might answer the meaning of the words themselves. To a certain extent this is true, but not the whole truth: and anything but the truth if it implies that the form of expression is something automatic and, as such, not worth troubling about. Or they may say that the parts of speech are used in a certain order and that order is fixed by the meaning. Now in a sentence like 'A goose eats grass' there is no doubt which eats which, but it cannot be said that the order is fixed by the meaning, for if the order were 'grass eats a goose' or 'eats a goose grass' or 'grass a goose eats', one might say that the man must have been drunk when he wrote the words, but there is no doubt what he meant

to say. But if the sentence were to contain three words such as 'Napoleon—Talleyrand—feared' or 'kill—boars—dogs', though we know the meaning of each word, we do not know the meaning of the sentence until those words are put in a certain order. And it is not a natural order : in the sense that the man who is expressing the idea, must naturally think of its meaning in a particular order of words. It may be that this natural way of thinking of the relations between Napoleon and Talleyrand, the way in which his meaning is most clear to himself, is simply :



or the way in which he feels he could express the meaning of the relation between dogs and boars most satisfactorily to himself is simply : 'kildoboargs'. But another man might find his meaning most clear in the form 'boardockills' or



It is evident, then, that if half a dozen people had agreed on what words were to be nouns, what verbs and so on, they would also have to agree on certain

rules for using them.' For example, in a very simple statement, such as one composed of the words this, that, dog, cat, likes, they must agree if they wish to understand one another that the noun before the verb is to be the subject, the one after to be the object. This may seem obvious ; the structural form of ' this cat likes that dog ' is so familiar that subject followed by predicate (in this case verb and noun) seems an inevitable order. But the meaning of ' that dog I saw only yesterday ' is also quite plain, and here the object precedes the subject. So, though one may call the order subject predicate normal, it is not inevitable. And to those who are inclined to think that subject followed by predicate is a natural order for the expression of a statement, a reference to other languages would be useful, to Gaelic, for example, where the verb usually precedes the subject (and where incidentally only the verb ' to be ' has a present tense) ; to Latin, in order to show how variable in order the words of a sentence can be, and how that variability allows economy of emphasis. In English, for example, the sentence ' Smith gave me the book.', written, gives no emphasis to any particular word. Spoken, by the tone of one's voice, it could without alteration be made to emphasise the fact that the book was a gift. But in writing as in speech, the Latin can express the particular emphasis required, whether on ' book ' or ' gave ' or ' me ', simply by changing the order of the words in the normal sentence ' *Balbus mihi libellum dedit* ' (Balbus gave me a book). Or if the gift was an attractive book, and the emphasis was on ' attractive ', ' it was an attractive book that Smith gave me ', the Latin can

express this as '*Lepidum mihi Balbus dedit libellum*'. In English, if one began separating adjectives in this way from their nouns, the result might be merely a change of meaning; for example, 'The white smith shod the horse', for 'The smith shod the white horse'. The flexibility of the Latin order is safeguarded by the inflections. The class should note how the adjective bears the mark of its noun, and also how the object noun is distinguished from the subject noun, by a 'case' ending: and a brief survey might be made of some of the more important points of an inflectional language such as Latin, as a contrasting system of rules, for the expression of ideas; and then the class might collect and examine the more common inflectional forms still remaining in English, to see whether they are merely survivals or whether they are indispensable to the expression of meaning. This suggestion is not meant as a covert attempt to introduce an inflectional model, complete with case endings, genders and the terminology, which may be suitable to one language, as the norm of what a sentence should be in another. But if boys are acquainted with the rudiments of an inflectional language such as Latin, both the strangeness and the greater elaboration of its forms should help them by contrast in their effort to discover what conventions a normal statement must observe: in order to express the more common needs of thought. Can one dispense, for example, with forms indicating number and person? Could one do without 'It is finished'? Could one reduce the voices of the verb to one, the active, with advantage to the language? What is the minimum of time indications with which

one can express necessary temporal contingencies? A comparison with Latin verb inflections is likely to provide a definite basis, without which even with common sense one might wander rather vaguely round the possible modes of expression necessary for communicating the situations met with in everyday intercourse. Such a comparison should be a basis for enquiry, not a subjugation of one type of language to another.

The verb will, naturally, be a focus to such an enquiry. It was perhaps the chief *bête noire* of parsing. One labelled it according to its person, number, tense, mood, voice; probably added its hobbies such as transitive or intransitive; and married it to one of the other words in the sentence, under a particular formula. But why it should be treated in this way was the last point explained, and that rarely. Moods and voices seemed to be singularly inappropriate thefts from the real world, and in their new relation meant very little that was not confusing. The mistake, in my opinion, was one of attitude. Under these curious terms real mental processes were being hidden; and the concealment led to a sense of frustration and consequent lack of interest. If the class can feel toward the matter that they are actually in touch with their own actual ways of thinking, that in spite of their terminology such things as tense, voice, auxiliary, transitive and infinitive—or their home-made equivalents—are real conditions of expression which they can understand from their own experience, then these things may appear even very attractive. And they are more likely to have this attitude, if they are making a grammar for a language

which they are in part making also, than if they are merely inspecting an apparently finished article.

Instead, then, of setting out to parse, let them try to invent standard sentence-forms, a code of conditions necessary for the expression of their own thought ; and stage by stage compare their results with the actual variations from such conditions in written language in order that they may recognise that a standard sentence-form, like a standard man, may be an indispensable condition for thought, but neither can represent the infinitude of real variations. In language, two men may be thinking of the same subject, and wish to give an exact expression to its meaning, as they conceive it, but as one man is not the other, that expression will have different shades of emphasis, a different rhythm : apparent both in vocabulary and in the disposition of words in a sentence ; and though normal sentence-forms may allow a certain scope for variation, they cannot be looked on as adequate to the needs of individual expression. This is not a defect in them : they provide points of reference within which individual variations may occur without loss of meaning. It is a defect to regard them as more restrictive controls to such variations, or to forget that they are conventions.

In speaking earlier of the subject and predicate, I assumed the common definition of a sentence as the expression of a complete thought, and gave such examples of a complete thought as ' George listened ', claiming that completeness might be considered as contact with reality due to the presence of the verb. For practical purposes, it seems impossible to avoid

defining the sentence either as a complete thought or in some similar restrictive way, and making an arbitrary limitation of its context. Actually who knows what is the whole context of a thought? Ideas are related to ideas with all the unending complexities of a carbon ring. A man writes on bees or dynamos. One sees three pages of words. Behind them and beyond them at each end, at the time of writing, existed innumerable ideas linked together in various ways without intermission, except possibly during intervals of sleep, and related to ideas the writer will be conceiving as long as he lives. In that sense, there is no completeness of thought in the three pages actually written. For a certain purpose he has rejected some and selected others, to be expressed in words. And supposing that the three pages represented a complete context of thought to other eyes, the same eyes would not read them or understand them if they were written without paragraphs and without stops within the paragraph. And many would not read them, if the stops did not regularly occur after every dozen words or thereabouts. And even though the writer does not allow every reader to dictate to him, he cannot ignore their requirements as a body. He must break up his ideas with stops; and the stop, if it is a full stop, must come at the end of a sentence: a tacit assurance to the reader that it completes a group of ideas. They are related to ideas both in front of them and behind them. But they have also an isolation of their own: they are fixed in words, and if word-groups do not form a certain pattern within themselves, there will be no access to meaning for the ideas they represent. What pattern



the words of a sentence are to take depends on the intention of the writer, on the choice of emphasis he makes, so that limited words and their constructions may convey what he wishes to express, to his greatest satisfaction. It may be a succession of simple sentences, it may be a complex sentence, woven together of many clauses. It may be no conventional pattern of a sentence, which produced the result nearest to his intention.

This relation of ideas to words, their subjection to a verbal completeness, is what one explores in analysis with a capital A—a long-established exercise in schools: and probably the most successful of grammatical exercises; for however much it is reduced to an unintelligent routine, it is first cousin to a jig-saw puzzle and so persists in being interesting. And although some boys may appear to understand that clauses can have the function of a noun, adjective or adverb, it is not until they have actually recognised this fact in a long succession of instances that they begin to feel secure in their knowledge.

Intelligently taken, analysis of clauses is a valuable discipline in the discovery of exact meaning: one uses the meaning of the whole context as a clue to the function of the clauses, and also the function of the clauses as a clue to the meaning of the whole. There are continuously occurring 'border-line cases' in which a definitive decision can be made the result of alert critical discussion. Boys should be encouraged to collect themselves examples which seem likely to present interesting problems of classification. But I do not think this work comes to its full value unless the analysis is not only a classification but a critical enquiry

into the way the writer has made use of a particular pattern of words to convey the meaning of his ideas, as that meaning appears to the class after analysing the sentences ; and this enquiry should be taken into a study of the emphases he intended, in fact, the whole problem he was facing when he was grouping ideas under verbal conditions. And the class, if they are dissatisfied with the pattern he used, should attempt to reconstruct the ideas on some other pattern, and submit their work to general criticism. They may, for example, take such a set of words as these from Pepys : ' The dancing master come, whom standing by, seeing him instructing my wife, when he had done with her, he would needs have me try the steps of a coranto ; and what with his desire and my wife's importunity, I did begin and then was obliged to give him entry money 10s. and am become his scholar ',—or at any rate, as far as ' coranto '—for they would probably have to be dictated. They might, after analysing these words, feel that they needed reconditioning. And when they had made them clear as chromium plate, it might then dawn on them that when they put their emended passage into the original context they had left out one important idea. And that was Pepys. But they would have taken a step further towards knowing how to deal with their own ideas.

When analysis of clauses is attempted in this way, it is difficult to draw a line between grammar and appreciation.

In this sketch of grammatical problems my aim has been to suggest possibilities, and illustrate them by

some reference to practice. The teacher may prefer that both in grammar and other sections of the book I should instead have outlined practice more definitely and made some reference to possibilities. I can understand his preference, but even if it were in my power to present him with an English method complete in all points and infallible, I should consider its safest place the fire.

## APPENDIX A

### A SUGGESTION FOR CERTAIN ESSENTIALS OF A TRAINING COLLEGE COURSE

I SHOULD like to see the following experiment made by an adequately staffed training college with those of their students who are at the stage of practising in school and attending lectures on the theory of education.

The college should naturally continue their school practice, but lectures on theory should only occupy such time as is available after the students have been through a course of what I might call practical English.

This should begin with one or two lectures on phonetics to the whole body of students ; to explain the phonetic alphabet. The real purpose of such lectures would be to impress the fact that the mouth, tongue and jaw do together in certain positions produce definite sounds, that in this process about a dozen muscles take part, and on the flexibility of their movements depends the accuracy of single and combined sounds, and on that accuracy depends the tone value,—the carrying power and the musical quality of speech—the utility and the aesthetic values of the voice. In brief, the aim of such lectures would be to make the students face-conscious ; or rather to begin that operation. For some men seem content to have been born once with flexible facial muscles. Unlike women, they do not feel the need of any facial art. They allow time and indolent habits to fix their muscles in an awkward mask, and then

regard this as a sacred emblem of virility. However, the hour for personalities, however tactful, is not a lecture, but a small class, the atmosphere of which can be such that tactful and yet uncompromising frankness, if it is strictly relevant, is met with understanding and without resentment by most men.

Divided then into classes of six to eight, students should receive certain rudiments of speech training : (1) whispering, with the most extensive use of mouth and jaw possible, until exact sounds are heard with ease twenty yards away : (2) reading a line, taking each sound by itself quite mechanically and trying to feel the lips take the required position, before any sound is uttered, or taking all the vowel-sounds first and then, as it were, slipping the consonant sounds on to them : then stressing one particular consonant sound throughout the line,—the *m*, *n*, *ng* are worth particular attention ; in fact, by exact production of all the voiced consonant sounds—though their full value is not appropriate to everyday speech—the tone of a voice is enriched, and with it comes an effortless carrying power. The throaty roughness of a voice can often be removed, if the speaker will practise humming a note, intoning and trying to alternate intonation with intervals of his usual speech.

All these exercises should be taken slowly, and interspersed with long pauses here and there between sounds : slowly, because at the normal rate of speaking the beginner cannot form the sounds exactly enough and has not time to make the full muscular movement ; and with pauses, so that he can become accustomed to his own silence. At first he often finds great difficulty, in speaking, to make a pause which has time to become a pause in a listener's ear, and as on these intervals of silence the whole of variation in pace or rhythm is based, it is important that they should exist.

In exercises of this kind a pocket mirror is useful, if only to notice the activities of the tip of the tongue.

This practice in slow articulation should be varied with its opposite. Beginning with a sequence of numbers, for example, one to ten, pronounced with care for every component sound, the students should gradually repeat them at increasing pace to the limit at which they are articulate. The same may be done with combinations of difficult sounds, the students suggesting their own difficulties. Hot towels and facial massage might have something of the same effect. Flexibility is the aim. It is not that one usually speaks with as open a mouth as in these exercises, or that one cannot produce a clear carrying sound with a small aperture ;—a larger mouth gives fuller volume, if it is needed—but one needs a speaking voice of as wide a range of variability as possible, so that all shades of expression may come within it effectively. Fortunately the practice needed for the intricacies of articulation also affects the quality of tone by changing the shape of the muscular walls of the mouth. Of all the muscles concerned, I should say none is more important than that which pivots the lower jaw forward, as for the *-ing* sound ; as this action makes a change in the shape of the interior mouth, where changes are important but difficult to effect.

Students should also in their visits to cinemas try to abstract themselves at times from the glamour of the scene and study as coolly as a dentist how many teeth are visible when some well-known stars are speaking. The play of lip and cheek can be quite instructive ; and given a good recording, the expressive tone of voices can be compared with the extent to which the whole mouth is used for its production.

When progress has been made in slow speech, reading for variation of emphasis and pace may be begun. Again

this should be at first artificial to a certain extent : even to the extent, if necessary, of reading a passage quite arbitrarily ; for example, four words fast, pause, four slow, pause, and so on, and then the same with a rise of pitch on every third word, and a fall of pitch on every seventh and so on : I am inclined to think that lines of meaningless sounds provide the best material for this. Gradual *crescendo* and *diminuendo*, sustained *staccato* words, in fact there is endless variation to such exercises, according as ingenuity can provide. Nearer to the next step is various interpretations of well-known passages.

After this, some dramatic reading in larger groups, two classes in one. It serves as an excellent solvent of self-consciousness ; it reveals defects in speech, which may be concealed, so long as there is nothing to take the mind off the actual production of sounds ; it should be made to include a simple art of movement, control of feet and hands, a reposeful restraint, if nothing more expressive, a certain poise and ease of movement,—Greek particles and atomic weights are not the whole of education—and of course there is a value in attempting to interpret an atmosphere in words, without the aid of more inspiring accessories than the average class-room supplies. The man who cannot let himself go in such attempts is not, as a general rule, going to be very successful with a class, other than a class of blotting-pads.

After this, these groups should have practice in narrative and story-telling. However much one's methods may be heuristic, with a class of more than one the ability to give a short piece of clear, vivid and resourceful narrative is of great value ; the boy who spends his life in single assignments suffers from being starved of it. Students might begin by giving a five-minute synopsis of the plot of any play in which they each are interested : a plain narrative

of the course of action, without any critical estimate except what is apparent in their choice of descriptive words. Many can make a tolerable criticism of a play through selections from written opinions : few can keep a narrative moving with clear and economic directness, arresting and with well-grouped points of emphasis : appropriate to ages from ten onwards. When this type of narrative has been practised, and some mastery of its technique gained, then one can turn to the practice of other types.

And while each man is narrator, the rest should be forming a judgment on what they consider merits and defects in the narrative, preparatory to its criticism. This will be directly concerned with the technique of narration ; but indirectly points will be raised of literary and aesthetic reference, and for a fuller discussion of these the classes may ultimately become groups for the study of problems in English thought and language ; and the fact that these emerge from practical requirements of expression should prevent their becoming the preserves of specialist cliques—an important thing, if it is possible in a university atmosphere—for some approach to a common course of cultural study is a responsibility to education which the training college cannot defer until it is realised as a university responsibility.



## APPENDIX B

IN selecting books as a guide to a prospective teacher, who wishes for such aid, I have tried to follow the principle of presenting him with contrasted points of view or differences of attitude or approach. In doing this I have both included and excluded books whose quality may merit a different fate. As it stands, the list by its size is threatened by promiscuity ; and yet it obviously omits works of great interest and relevance. But a student who finds his way into the thick of the list will find plenty of references pointing him well beyond it.

Report on the Teaching of English in England.  
Suggestions for the teaching of English in Secondary Schools.  
Memorandum on the Teaching of English, by the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters.

- BATCHELDER, W. J. *Notes on the Teaching of English.*  
GREENING LAMBORN, E. A. *Expression in Speech and Writing.*  
PALMER, H. E. *Teaching of English.*  
TOMKINSON, W. S. *Teaching of English.*  
HARTOG, P. T. *Writing of English.*  
BRACKEN, G. H. *Teaching of English in Secondary Schools for Girls.*  
RATCLIFF, A. J. J. *Teaching of English in Upper Forms.*  
BRACKENBURY, L. *Teaching of Grammar.*  
CALDWELL COOK, H. *Play Way.*  
SAMPSON, G. *English for the English.*

- BALLARD, P. B. *Thought and Language*.  
LEE, VERNON. *The Handling of Words*.  
OGDEN, C. K., AND RICHARDS, I. A. *The Meaning of Meaning*.  
OGDEN, C. K. *Basic English*.  
GARDINER, A. H. *The Theory of Speech and Language*.  
JESPERSEN, O. *The Philosophy of Grammar*.  
KERR, W. *The English Apprentice*.  
HOTHERSALL, H. *English Composition*.  
DENT, T. C. *Thought in English Prose (Senior)*.  
COLES, A. J. *Thought in English Prose (Junior)*.  
THOMPSON, D. *Reading and Discrimination*.  
JEPSON, R. W. *The Writer's Craft*.  
ELIOT, T. S. *The Sacred Wood*.  
RICHARDS, I. A. *Science and Poetry*.  
—— *Principles of Literary Criticism*.  
LEAVIS, F. R. *How to teach Reading*.  
LEAVIS, F. R., and THOMPSON, D. *Culture and Environment*.  
EMPSON, W. *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.  
POUND, EZRA. *How to Read*.  
EASTMAN, M. *The Literary Mind*.  
LUCAS, F. L. *The Criticism of Poetry*.  
SPARROW, J. *Sense and Poetry*.  
MURRY, J. MIDDLETON. *The Problem of Style*.  
WILLIAMS, C. *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*.  
QUILLER COUCH, A. *The Art of Reading*.  
ABERCROMBIE, L. *The Theory of Poetry*.  
KNIGHT, G. W. *The Wheel of Fire*.  
STOLL, E. E. *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare*.  
FORSTER, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*.  
LEAVIS, Q. M. *The Novel and the Reading Public*.  
LUBBOCK, P. *The Craft of Fiction*.  
SPENDER, S. *The Destructive Element*.

*Printed in Great Britain by R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, Edinburgh.*















